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Bass Guitar

LEMMY
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MARK KING

After 40 years of bass wizardry, what's next for Level 42's Thumb Of Doom?

ASHLEY REEVE
Rocking stadiums with Cher

VICTOR BRANDT
The metal master speaks

12-STRING BASSES?
Inside the world's biggest collection

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EXCLUSIVE
First reviews of killer Hartke, Stonefield, Jackson and Aguilar gear
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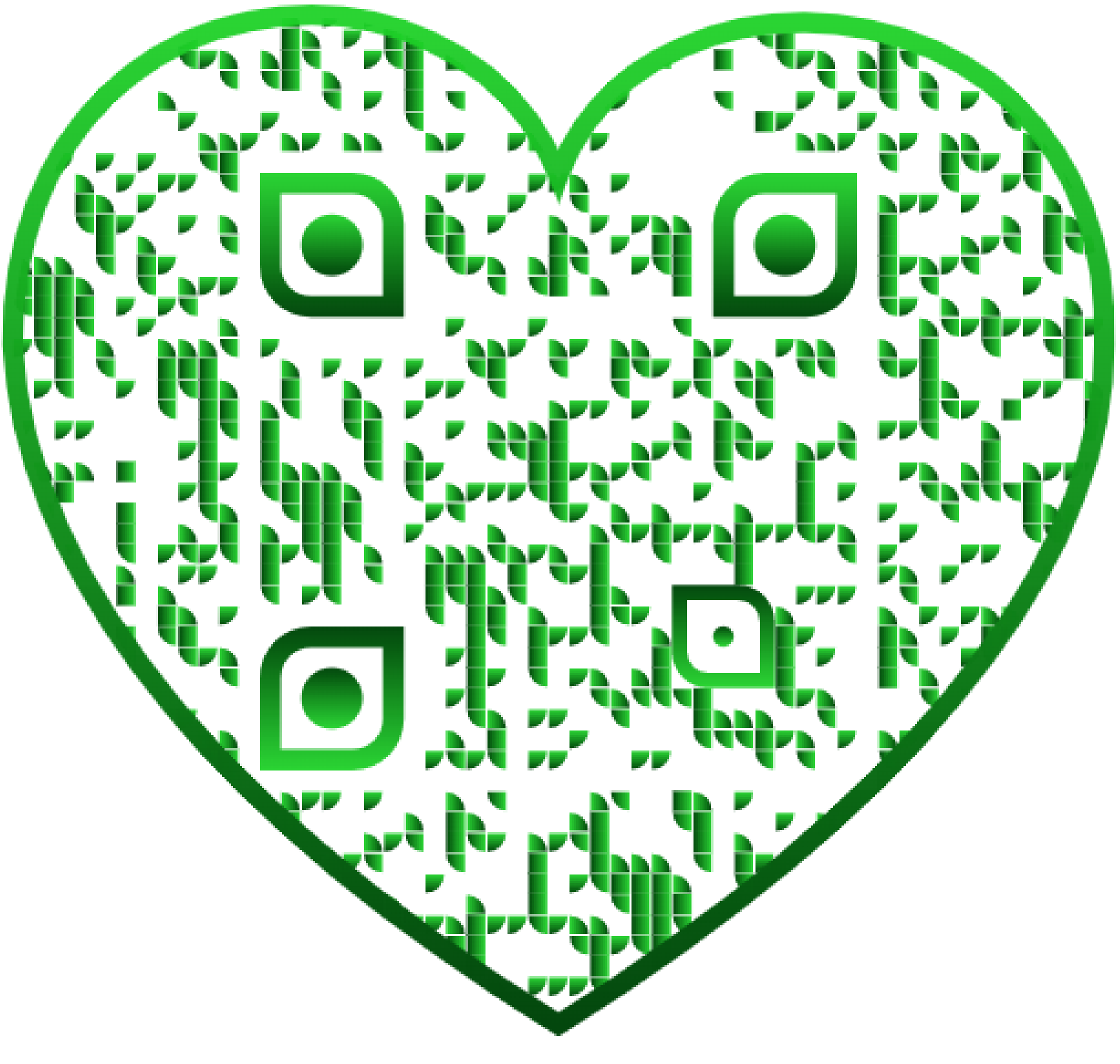

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CONTENTS

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joel.mciver@futurenet.com
Managing Editor Stan Bull
Technical Consultant Stuart Clayton
Contributors to this issue Antonio Angotti, Mike Brooks, Stuart Clayton, Joe Daly, Hywel Davies, Joe Hubbard, Steve Lawson, Phil Mann, Dan Veall
Graphic Design Rosie Webber, Mixie Von Bormann
Cover image Tina Korhonen
Studio Photography Future Studio
Chief Revenue Officer Zack Sullivan
UK Commercial Sales Director Clare Dove
Advertising Sales Director Lara Jaggon
Account Sales Director Guy Meredith
guy.meredith@futurenet.com

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Licensing
International Licensing Director **Matt Ellis**
matt.ellis@futurenet.com Tel: + 44 (0)1225 442244

Chief Content Officer Aaron Asadi
Brand Director, Music Stuart Williams
Content Director, Music Scott Rowley
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Non-executive chairman **Peter Allen**
Chief financial officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**
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There are no boundaries in the world of bass: these days, this truth applies more to our chosen instrument than to any other. Look at the new issue of our magazine, for example. Our cover star Mark King has been anchoring Level 42 with a combination of lightning-fast thumb slapping and Jaco-style warmth for four decades now. Then there's Lemmy, whose distorted roar of chords is the polar-opposite approach. Meanwhile, Cher's bassist Ashley Reeve and Dimmu Borgir's Victor Brandt both play huge venues, but with absolutely opposed aesthetics, and somewhere off to the side, you'll see 12-string bass collector Mark Rowe taking a completely different view. No boundaries. It's all valid, it's all exciting and it's all bass.

That's an ethos which underpins everything we do on this magazine. Nothing is off limits: if you're involved with bass, we want to hear from you. Elsewhere in this issue, we interview Dr Jonathan Kemp, the Scottish scientist and revolutionary string-maker; Jamiroquai's Paul Turner, one of the funkiest bassists on the planet; and eight up-and-coming bass players in our brand-new First Bass section. We review bass gear from the affordable to the painfully pricey; we bring you state-of-the-art lessons from the finest bass teachers in the world; and we advise you on every part of the way to the top, from learning theory, to managing a pedalboard, to getting a gig and keeping it.

No boundaries. We're all in this together. Stay well, and I'll see you in July.

Joel McIver, Editor

Gear

36 **Marleaux Contra £6750**
A ferociously costly four-string beauty from the hands of Gerald Marleaux falls into the hands of Mike Brooks. Will we ever get it back?

38 **Jackson CBXM X-Series Signature David Ellefson Concert IV and V £719, £769**
Can this really be a Jackson, asks Joe Daly, faced with the new signature basses from Megadeth's David Ellefson?

40 **Stonefield F-Series Classic £900**
Like the look and sound of Stonefield basses but can't afford one? Your prayers have been answered, says Brooks

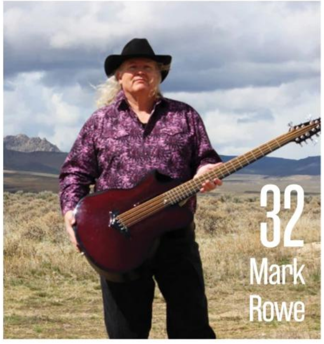
42 **Hartke LX8500 £599**
The new big box from the esteemed amp-makers Hartke arrives on Stuart Clayton's desk. Cover your ears, he advises

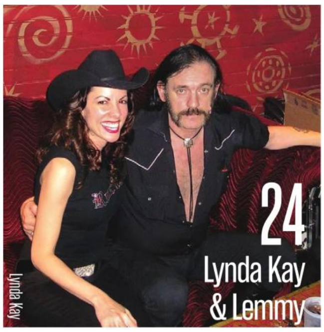
44 **Aguilar DB925 Bass Preamp £195**
A new tone-shaping pedal from Aguilar in a small, but perfectly formed, package. Brooks assesses its potential applications

Bassists

18 **Mark King, Level 42**
It's been 40 years since the jazz-funk legends Level 42 first stepped on stage – so it's high time we raised a celebratory glass with Mark King, the fastest thumb in the West. As we discover, not even a dose of Covid-19 can stop him from reinventing the paradigm and planning to tour major venues... Listen and learn!

24 **When Lynda Kay met Lemmy...**
Actor and singer-songwriter Lynda Kay reveals the unexpectedly tender side of the late, immensely great Ian 'Lemmy' Kilmister of Motörhead, with whom she was close friends – and with whom a duet has just been released





28 **Pass Notes: Ashley Reeve**
Our new Pass Notes section distils the career advice of the professionals when it comes to getting a gig, holding it down and being the best bassist you can be. This month: Ashley Reeve, Cher

30 **Victor Brandt, Dimmu Borgir**
Swedish metal maestro Victor has headbanging in his blood, and a signature Sandberg to do it with. We head to the frozen north...

32 **Eight strings good... 12 strings better!**
We meet Mark Rowe, owner of the world's biggest collection of 12-string bass guitars. Are we right to be intimidated by these monsters, we ask?

Lessons

12 **Theory Of The Month**
Play diatonic chords in a major key area with the mighty Joe Hubbard

50 **BEGINNER**
Steve Lawson helps us to get the most out of our loopers whilst stuck at home

54 **INTERMEDIATE**
Subordinate substitutions made easy with Phil Mann

60 **ADVANCED**
Stuart Clayton discusses the power of the double stop in slap bass

Columns

8 **Low Life**
Tax The Heat bassist and BIMM Live Performance tutor Antonio Angotti advises us gig preparation from home

10 **Bass Of Tomorrow**
Planet Earth's most forward-thinking bass-makers interviewed by Hywel Davies. This month: Dr Jonathan Kemp of Kemp Strings

11 **Woodshed**
Ace luthier Rob Elrick explains the importance of the truss rod and how to adjust one

14 **First Bass**
A new section where we introduce new, new-ish or otherwise noteworthy bass players. Mark our words, the Geddy Lees and Carol Kayes of the future are here...

46 **Star Bass**
Let's celebrate the great and less-great recordings of a given star. This month, it's Paul Turner of Jamiroquai

66 **The Last Note**
Dan Veall signs off with a solution to all our bass problems. This month: delay pedals

THE LOWDOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by *BGM*'s team of intrepid newshounds

CORT STRENGTH

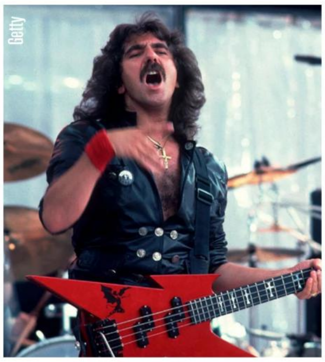
Cort's new A5 Plus SC bass has been reissued as a standard scale instrument, in response to bassists who preferred traditional fretting to that of its multi-scale predecessor. There's a new finish, Amber Open Pore, fo the poplar burl top, but otherwise it's the same singlecut, neck-through, string-through, 34" bass with a panga panga fretboard that we played and enjoyed at NAMM this year. Bartolini MK-1 pickups and preamp combination provides punch, boost and high end, and all for around the $1500 mark.
www.440distribution.com

STAND TALL

The new collapsible modular Multiple RockStands from Warwick can be expanded to accommodate a range of instruments, from bass to guitar and beyond, at an affordable price. The RockStands feature a telescopic mechanism for mobility, roller sets with brakes or footrests and tools for mounting and relocating. They're black with anthracite softpads. You can flip them to accommodate your priceless Flying V bass and they'll hold up to nine instruments.
https://shop.warwick.de

SHARP NOTES

In early May, the great Geezer Butler of Black Sabbath recalled his experience of playing a custom BC Rich Ironbird bass at 1985's Live Aid show, the enormo-gig that helped to raise millions for famine relief. "I could hardly play the bloody thing," he said in a tweet. "I still have it. I whacked my thumb on that sharp edge... It went right into my nerve and my whole hand went numb." We think we might have found a picture of the exact moment when heavy metal digit met heavy metal bass, and came off worst. Ouch.
@geezerbutler



Getty

PICKY

In a recent interview with *Palm Beach Florida Weekly*, former Metallica bassist Jason Newsted explained that on joining the renowned metallers in 1986, he received more than his fair share of derision for playing with a pick, unlike the fingerstyle of his late predecessor Cliff Burton. "Lemmy played bass with a pick, and I played bass with a pick," he said. "And I got made fun of for playing bass with a pick. Back in the day, I wish I had the answers [that I have] now when somebody talked shit like that. The most successful bassist of all time plays left-handed, and his name is Paul McCartney. He's the only billionaire bassist that ever lived. He played with a pick. Gene Simmons is pushing a beat: 840 million [records sold]. He plays with a pick. Metallica, 100 million records sold. The Black Album is one out of four all-time that's been on the Billboard charts 500 weeks or more. So this guy played with a pick, too." The man has a point. Join the debate of pick versus fingers over at our social media...

IN THE GROOVES

Albums rocking our office this month

NEW ALBUM

Michael Manring, Small Moments (2020)

An incredibly innovative solo bassist, Michael consistently delivers mind-expanding songwriting. His new 12-tracker is proof that he's still got it.

OLD ALBUM

Red Hot Chili Peppers, One Hot Minute (1995)

This album may be among the least acclaimed among the Chilis' considerable fanbase, but in bass terms, Flea is on superb form.

REALLY OLD ALBUM

Sarah Vaughan, Sarah Vaughan (1950)

The astounding bass of Billy Taylor, Sr. is matched only by Sarah Vaughan's liquid vocals on this immortal debut album.

DAVE DAZE

The amusing Italian YouTuber Davie504, known for posting bass-related clips that have attracted over six million followers, made headlines in April when he bought a load of cheap basses and gave them away to bass players stuck in lockdown. "Everybody's forced to stay home, and this can be extremely tough," explained the YouTuber. "But luckily, I am here to save you."

A resident of Taiwan, he told his followers: "These are very dark times. Pretty much every country in the world is on lockdown. Many huge problems are arising and affecting our lives. For example, now we cannot buy bass... [but] I am in Taiwan right now and here everything is normal. I'm going to all the music stores I can find and I'm going to buy all the bass guitars that they have and then I am going to give them all away to you." Buying 15 basses and arranging to give them away via his YouTube channel, he quipped: "I won't be able to pay for my water bill anymore."

www.youtube.com/user/Davie504

BREAD FAN

A recent film has emerged of the late Leo Fender's handmade Breadboard Bass, essentially a chunk of wood with strings that was used to test pickups. Combining elements from Leo's brands Fender, Music Man and G&L, the Breadboard gets its name from its resemblance to the similar kitchen item. As Dave McLaren from CLF Research puts it in the video, "It sort of touches all three brands."

Leo first assembled it in the 1960s, while he was at Fender, and installed a traditional Fender bridge. Later on, he added a Music Man neck. Finally, he added single-coil MFD (Magnetic Field Design) pickups with large adjustable pole pieces, which he had developed for his G&L instruments. "This is where you see the man's personal journey transcend the brands," McLaren states. "We have the Fender brand beginnings, and then the Music Man brand and then finally the G&L brand. It's all kind of in one thing." Did it have a major 'roll' in the development of crust-punk, we ask? Watch the video at www.guitarworld.com under 'Bass Player'.

LOW LIFE

Nail your preparation with Tax The Heat bassist and BIMM Live Performance tutor Antonio Angotti

BIMM INSTITUTE

Hello bassists! I hope you're all keeping happy and healthy. During these uncertain times, it's important for us to keep on top of our playing and refining our performance skills – and fortunately, this is something that can be done from the comfort of our own homes. I've touched on preparation in previous issues, but you can treat this as a definitive guide to preparing for live performance.

NOTES AND CHARTS

When preparing for a tour or show where you need to learn existing bass parts, it's important to do a bit of groundwork on your understanding of the structure. This is arguably where most mistakes stem from, so it is not a step to skip. There are a number of ways of doing this. You may be supplied with charts, which is great, but often it is a case of working it out by ear. My preference is to write down the structure using the section names (intro, verse 1, pre-chorus 1, chorus 1 and so on) and then lay out the bars for each section. You may also want to note down any specific arrangement elements such as stops and stabs. If you aren't well versed in notation, you could simply highlight or circle on which beats of the bar these synch-ups occur. With this in place, it gives you an accurate roadmap to play along with, and helps with visualising and ingraining the part.

ENDURANCE TRAINING

When we find ourselves with prolonged amounts of time between playing live – as so many of us are experiencing right now – it is important that we do not let our performance abilities slip, in particular the stamina required to play for longer periods of time. I find a good way of keeping this honed is through creating playlists or hypothetical 'sets' and using some of my practice time to play through them in full. To add variation and challenge to this task, you could look at creating different playlist lengths, building from 30 minutes to two hours. You could also review the material within the playlist and aim to make it more technically demanding as you look to increase your playing endurance. A good offshoot of this approach is that you also build your playable repertoire.

> "IT'S IMPORTANT WE DO NOT LET OUR PERFORMANCE ABILITIES SLIP"

GEAR MAINTENANCE

Part of your preparation also includes making sure your equipment is gig-ready. Regarding any basses you will be using, it's important to give them a regular once-over – checking for dead spots, monitoring the action and intonation, and watching out for intermittent input sockets or noisy control pots. If you're new to these repairs, the good news is that a lot of them are achievable with a basic instrument toolkit and some YouTube tutorials. When it comes to the trickier areas of maintenance, it is a good idea to get a professional to check it over. Either way, you need to take steps to rectify any issues. Lastly, do not forget the small but equally important bits too – cables, power supplies, pedals, and so on all need to be in good shape, with spares on hand just in case.

GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

Playing along to studio-recorded tracks is one thing, but to give yourself a more relevant experience for practising live performance, you might want to consider playing along to live recordings. The wealth of live concert and live sessions available on the internet now is vast. There are even dedicated streaming services such as Qello, which host a wide range of full-length concerts for you to be able to watch for enjoyment, or practice along with. The difference with live recordings is the potential for improvised moments or altered arrangements. It also teaches you the art of live dynamics and adjusting your parts to suit a live interpretation. This could even be combined with the second tip I gave you and become part of your endurance training.

Do you have any questions surrounding live performance? Message me at @MrA_TaxTheBass and I'll broach them in an upcoming issue. Catch you all next time!

Getty

Getty

BASS OF **TOMORROW**

We can think of a few string manufacturers who claim to make the best-sounding products in the world. Dr Jonathan Kemp doesn't just make that claim – he can prove it, too. Hywel Davies is blinded with science...

Words: Hywel Davies

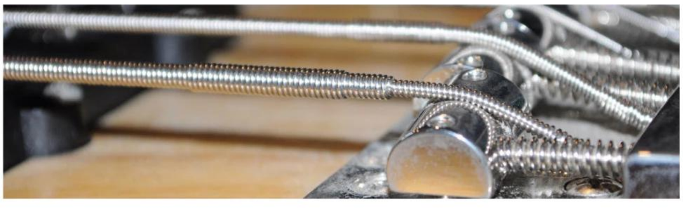
For most of us, the science that surrounds our basses often gets overlooked. We pluck a string; the string vibrates; the vibration makes sexy sounds; the audience shake their tail feathers; and it's another job well done. Well, that simply isn't enough for one of the top minds in music technology today. Dr Jonathan Kemp of the Music Centre and School of Physics and Astronomy at the University of St Andrews in Scotland has focused his research on the effects of inharmonicity in lower-sounding strings, helping to improve the tone.

But first, Doctor, please explain what inharmonicity is for us uneducated bassists? "Inharmonicity is the resonances of the string going increasingly sharp of the true harmonic series," explains Kemp. "It leads to problems because it can sound as if more than one note is being played at once – even when you're only playing one note. This tends to occur as you go up the neck." Got that? Good, let's move on.

Dedicating most of his time to research at the University, Kemp uses his findings in his own string business. The Kemp Strings range is the result of countless hours of scientific study, giving the phrase 'string theory' a whole new meaning. The journey began with guitar before moving to bass, he explains.

"What got me into it was using tremolo bars. It opened up a whole rabbit hole, which ended up with me getting some strings made. Once I got my electric guitar strings it was time to get to bass strings and start research into those. The thing about bass strings that needed to be worked out was inharmonicity – you want to minimise that. I wanted strings with taper on, to find out what that meant for harmonicity."

He adds: "I wanted to come up with a formula for the optimum length of taper to get a particular reduction of inharmonicity. I actually found it was the other way around, because the taper increases the inharmonicity. During my research, I found that at the University of Edinburgh they already had a formula to work that out on piano strings. I produced my own code which predicted what size of lump you would need at the saddle that would result in inharmonicity being reduced. I was very happy, because the research has been there since the 90s for piano but was never picked up by any of the big companies."



Packed as they are with enough science to send a colony to Mars, are Kemp's strings the best on the market, we wonder? "They're better than anything else," he laughs. "I can quantifiably prove that they're better – but are they better enough that they're going to outweigh the competition? We'll see..."

www.kempstrings.com

THE WOODSHED

'Truss' ace luthier Rob Elrick to get it right...

Welcome to the Woodshed! Because every bass player is different, optimal set-up is a completely subjective determination. There is simply no one ideal set-up for every player. For this reason, the ability to perform the adjustments required to maintain your personal instruments is invaluable.

Over the years, I've worked with some high-profile bass players who, for fear that they would likely make things worse if they got in too deep, were uncomfortable making anything but the most basic, minor adjustments to their own basses. That's a tough position to put yourself in if the instrument you're dependent upon to make your living starts making moves of its own, especially if you're travelling!

The one mechanical device on a guitar which elicits the most profound dread when the time comes for adjustment is the truss rod. It's possible that the truss rod's power to intimidate lies in the fact that it is hidden inside the neck, heightening its mystery. Let's talk about truss rods – and see if we can ease some of the apprehension about adjusting them on your own, with a quick disclaimer to the effect that you shouldn't attempt any major adjustments without consulting a professional first, of course.

The truss rod is a simple device. In vintage and vintage-style instruments, it is most often a single rod. In modern basses, the truss rod is typically constructed of two rods welded together. True to its name, a truss rod functions as an adjustable truss.

But what does 'truss' mean, anyway? Well, the dictionary defines it as a supporting strut or framework of some kind. You've undoubtedly seen architectural trusses many times. A variety of truss configurations are used in the construction of bridges, their top and bottom chords respectively performing the functions of compression and tension.

Those used in guitar necks are the most basic type of truss, performing the same tasks of compression and tension from inside the neck. Adjusting this truss affords the ability to counter not only the tension applied to the neck by strings, but also the internal tension of the wood from which the neck is constructed. Those internal tensions are the ones which affect the relief of an instrument's neck when seasons or atmospheric conditions change.

Your truss rod may adjust from the end of the neck near the body or from the headstock. Making adjustments for both types of installations is the same – only the access point is different. If you happen to have a bass with two truss rods, it is best to adjust the rods equally, as they are meant to function in sympathy, not opposition. Many modern basses use two-way truss rods that are capable of applying both positive and negative force to adjust neck relief. With these, there is a point at which the adjuster may 'zero out' – or reach an equal point between forward and backward action. The adjuster will reengage if you keep turning.

The first thing to understand about how a truss rod works is that, under tension, they bow like an arch – see **Figure 1**. The rod is not meant to move or adjust one section of a neck, but rather, to move the entire neck. If your neck is straight and true, it should be possible to achieve zero relief when the strings are removed, as in **Figure 2**. Adding tension to the neck by bringing strings to pitch will typically result in some forward relief, as with **Figure 3**. If that relief is greater than desired, it's time to adjust your truss rod. Applying tension to the rod by tightening counters the tension of the strings, returning relief of the neck back to zero, or as close to zero as preferred for your personal set-up. Always remember the cardinal rule of turning a screw mechanism, in other words 'righty-tighty, lefty-loosey'.

Checking the relief of your neck without a precision straight edge is fairly simple. Under tension, the strings create an excellent straight line reference.

FIG.1

FIG.2

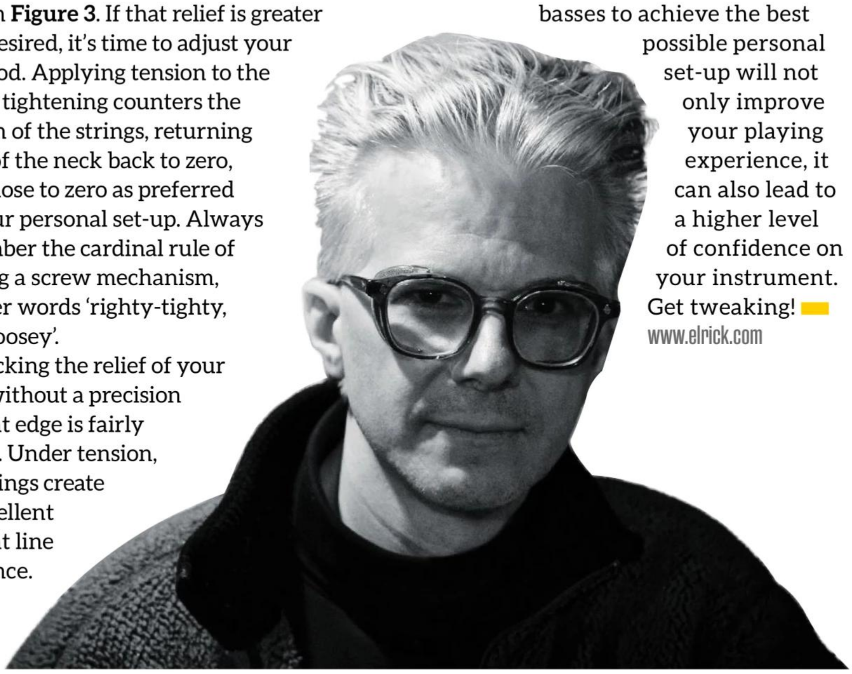
FIG.3

By pushing down on the first and last fret of an outside string, the relief of the neck can be observed along the string's length.

Always be sure that you use the correct tool to operate your truss rod's adjuster. If an allen key is required, make sure it fits with no play inside the keyway. Using one that is slightly undersize could result in stripping or rounding out of the keyway, leading to a potentially expensive repair. There is one more important rule to bear in mind – never force the adjuster on your truss rod. A 'frozen' adjuster is a sign that professional intervention may actually be a more economical alternative to a do-it-yourself set-up. Forcing your truss rod can lead to expensive damage that might otherwise be easily avoided.

Understanding how to adjust your basses to achieve the best possible personal set-up will not only improve your playing experience, it can also lead to a higher level of confidence on your instrument. Get tweaking!

www.elrick.com



THEORY OF THE MONTH

Play diatonic chords in a major key area with the mighty Joe Hubbard

TRINITY COLLEGE LONDON

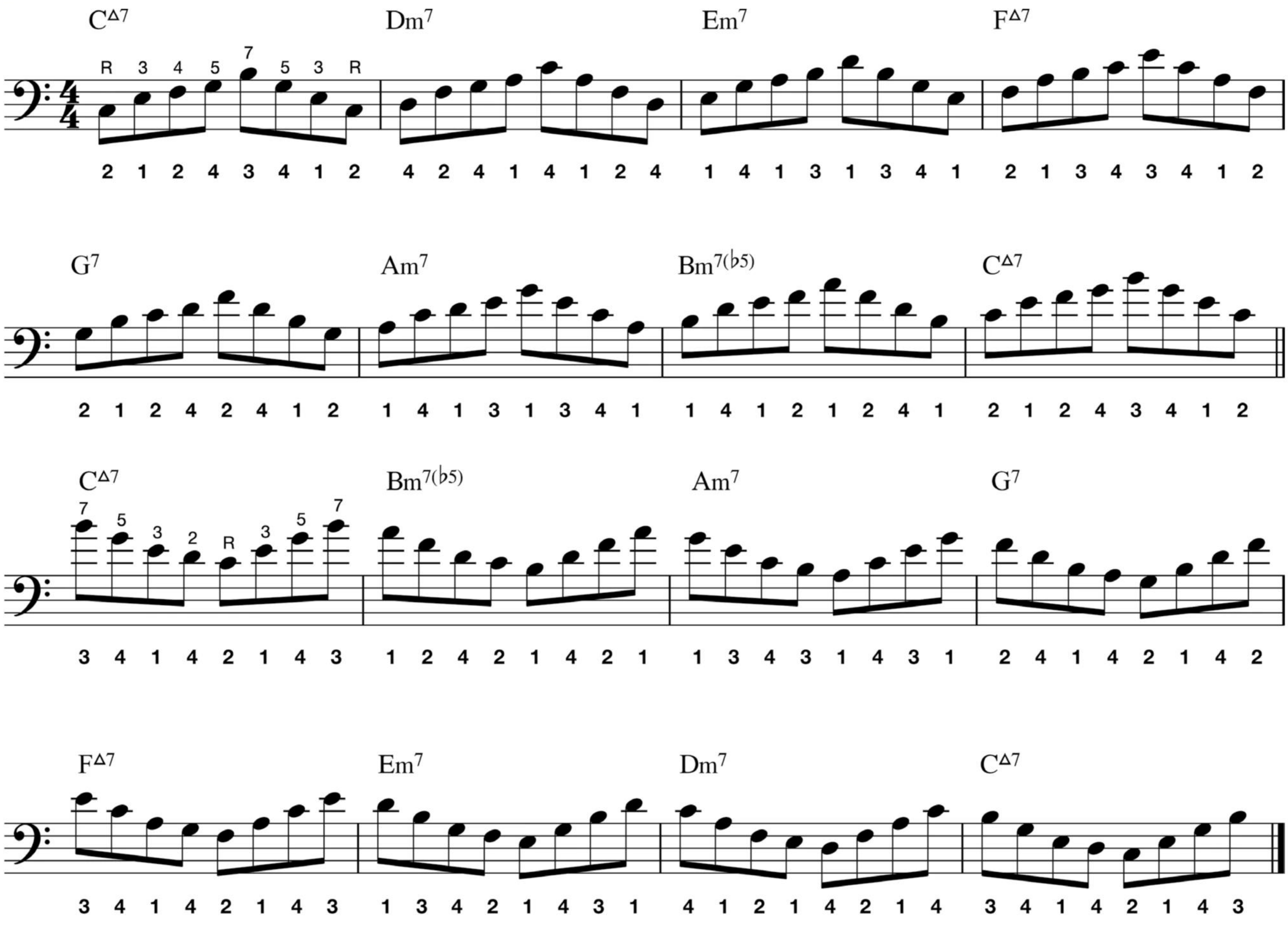
Hello there! Learning to play through chord changes is a skill that requires you to be able to understand and hear how chords work when progressing from one to another. Exercises that outline all the diatonic chords with chord tones are great for exposing your ears to hearing the sound of the key you're playing in, but do little for understanding how you would learn to play lines through the changes. Let's fix that!

Indulge me for a moment. Have you ever played through the diatonic chords of a key centre with chord tones only? There are hundreds, if not thousands, of bass lessons on the internet that show this approach. They'll take the key of C and ask you to play Cmaj7, D-7, E-7, Fmaj7, G7, A-7, B-7(♭5) and back to Cmaj7. This can serve as a drill to help you to hear the key you're playing, for sure, but unfortunately it is often sold as an exercise that will help you to navigate your way as you improvise through a set of chord changes. In that form, it just doesn't work.

However, by adding just one scale passing tone to this sequence, it will suddenly work as an improvisational enabler straight out of the box. In the following exercise, we're going to play diatonic chords from the key of C major, and when ascending, we're going to add a 4th between the 3rd and the 5th. Then, when coming back down, we're going to add a 2nd between the 3rd and the root. You will immediately hear how these lines sound like musical phrases that play through the changes with a much more real-world outcome.

Don't get me wrong: this is still an isolated key-related exercise, but what it adds is a more realistic outcome that you will be able to start using immediately over standard chord progressions. Practise smart, work hard and play creatively!

Example 1



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SCROLL TO PAGE 69

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THE BASSES, THE AMPS AND THE MODELLING UNIT **REVIEWED!**

+ BILLY SHEEHAN | PETER HOOK | GAIL ANN DORSEY | STANLEY CLARKE & MORE

FIRST BASS

A killer new section of the mag devoted to new, new-ish or just amazing bass players

ALEX WINDSOR

SHIRAGIRL

What was your way into bass?
Like hundreds of other young guitarists, I switched over to bass to satisfy a demand. I started out learning the guitar around age 13. I grew up in a pretty small town and the only real opportunity to perform was in my high school pep band. They didn't have a guitar spot, so I agreed to learn the bass. Little did I know that I would fall in love with the instrument, and ultimately discover my true calling. My first bass was a used Squier Precision that we found at the back of a pawn shop.

What bass gear do you currently use?
A 2011 Fender American Deluxe Jazz V, a 2019 Fender American Professional Precision, a Fender Bassman 800 Hybrid head and a 4x10 cab. My favorite bass is still my Jazz V. It has the best tone and the most comfortable neck out of anything I've ever owned. The reason that I sought out a five-string was to be able to play more comfortably in the higher register. It gives me more freedom when soloing or playing intricate jazz lines. I'm proudly endorsed by GHS strings. I've been using their Bass Boomers because I really love their punch and clarity.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
The groove is everything. It is the heartbeat of the song, no matter what style of music you are playing. Fancy lines and funky techniques are a great way to add flavour, but in my opinion, none of that matters if the groove is not totally locked in.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
I don't think in terms of rank when it comes to musicians. Like all other art forms, it's subjective. If I absolutely have to put down an answer, then I'd have to say that Victor Wooten deserves an enormous amount of credit for bringing a fresh perspective to contemporary music.

Where can we hear you play?
My band Shiragirl. Produced by Tim Armstrong, our latest EP *Andi Underground* is a dystopian punk rock musical with a fresh take on the classic story of *Alice In Wonderland*. In addition to performing and touring, we plan to write and empower more female musicians along the way.

www.alexnicolewindsor.com

CHASE BRYANT

WARBRINGER

Crissy Angel

What was your way into bass?
When I was 15, my friend bought a guitar and I knew that I wanted to get one too so we could start a band. One day, I heard the song 'Clown' by Korn, and there was this gnarly sounding bass-line right before the huge mosh part. I couldn't distinguish what it was that I was hearing. My friend had to explain to me that it was the bass guitar, and that there was an instrument with four strings that sounded like that. I was immediately like, 'I want to do that'. I couldn't think why anyone would want to play anything else – it was the most badass thing I'd ever heard.

My first bass was a blue sparkle Yamaha RBX four-string I bought off a friend who I worked with at the grocery store. He had a crazy haircut and three tongue piercings, plus many tattoos, and I immediately associated bass playing with this guy's level of intensity and swag. I was so excited to have anything to do with him or other musicians, let alone be inheriting this incredibly cool bass and amp. I still have that bass to this day. A couple years later I bought my first Precision. I eventually took the frets off and turned it into a PJ config with Nordstrand pickups, thanks to the master craftsmanship of Maurillio Maurina.

What bass gear do you currently use?
I use a Yamaha RBXJM6, the former signature model of John Myung, which is still my best studio bass to this day. I have an Ernie Ball Bongo Stealth six-string with LaBella flats on it, a 1977 Jazz, a double bass and my main road bass that I play with Warbringer, which is a Nash JB5 with Elixir strings. I'm currently using the Markbass Little Mark 800 as my main head. Depending on the gig size, I'll vary between a Markbass 1x15 or an Ampeg 8x10.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Jaco Pastorius. He's the Wayne Gretzky of bass players as far as style and capability goes, as well as one of the best to ever do it. Thundercat is also on that list for me. There are so many incredible solo bass players, but very few that ever make me *feel*.

Where can we hear you play?
Warbringer's new album, *Weapons Of Tomorrow*, is out now.

Instagram: @chaseonbass_

HWANHEE JO

BURSTERS

What was your way into bass?
I first got into bass back when I was in middle school. It was at church. They needed someone to play the bass, so I volunteered, picked it up, and then kept playing. Later, I joined the high school band, and that was when I really got into bass and started studying the instrument in earnest.

What bass gear do you currently use?
The bass guitars I'm using right now are a Spector Euro 4LX-TW and a Bacchus Woodline 417. I also use the Darkglass B7K preamp and the Bass Big Muff Pi fuzz. For my amps, I have an Ampeg SVT CL 300 and an Aguilar Tone Hammer 500, and then for the speaker cabinet, an Ampeg SVT 810 AV.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
When I first started taking bass seriously, my teacher at the time told me, "The basics are the most important and the most difficult. You will become a good player just from being good at the basics". This really hit me. As you know, practising the basic skills can get really boring and difficult in many ways – but I genuinely believe that if you don't practise the basics enough, you'll soon run into your own limits when you try to play various songs and styles.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
I think there have been a ton of incredible bassists, but I'll choose Jaco Pastorius. I think of him as the Jimi Hendrix of bass. I think he taught us all how you can make the bass really shine amid all the other instruments.

Where can we hear you play?
I'm in the K-Rock band Bursters, so you can listen to my playing on our two albums, *Live In Hope* and *Once And For All*. You can also hear me on our first English single 'Barriers', which got on the Kerrang! Radio playlist and stayed for over 14 weeks, and our second single 'Colors'. Stay tuned for when we come to your area. It'll be a wild show.

www.facebook.com/BurstersOfficial

COCO RAMONA

VIOLET FIELDS

Christoph Voy

What was your way into bass?
When I was 13 years old, I heard Muse's *Black Holes And Revelations* album and was immediately drawn to the incredible bass. It felt electric! The next day after school, I bought myself the cheapest bass the music shop had in stock. It came with a small practice amp, so that was the beginning for me. I grew up in a small town in Germany that was mainly known for classical music, so it was a rather interesting choice to play electric bass. I struggled to find like-minded musicians to start a band with, but it never stopped me from playing bass, which has always been my passion. My first bass was a black and white Fender copy. I played it for about three years, then replaced it with a white Epiphone Thunderbird.

What bass gear do you currently use?
My favourite bass ever to date is my circa-1968 Kremona violin bass. It's got a twangy 60s punch with a perfect feel, and is very light. I also use an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff and Bass Clone, and I play through Ampeg SVT and Orange amps.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Embrace your own style and try not to let yourself feel restricted. If something doesn't work out, just find another way around it. Draw from as many different styles as possible and you will find your signature sound. With your bass, write a song within a song. That always struck me with the Smiths: Andy Rourke's bass-lines alone were just as exciting as Johnny Marr's guitar work or Morrissey's vocal melodies.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Paul McCartney. His playing, performance style, energy and creative genius make him simply one of the greatest who ever lived. I grew up with music such as the Monkees, ABBA, Morrissey and David Bowie, and I was always fascinated by the bass production of particular records. For instance, a producer like Tony Visconti could always bring out a punchy, driving bass sound. It was these classic records that inspired me to pursue playing bass.

Where can we hear you play?
My band Violet Fields is a four-piece indie-rock/Britpop outfit based in Berlin. We've released a few singles and a debut EP, and we've been in the studio for the past few months working on our new EP, *Silent World*, soon to be released. It was recorded in Berlin at Goldfinger Studios and mixed and produced by James Aparicio (Nick Cave, PJ Harvey, Depeche Mode).

www.facebook.com/violetfieldsmusic

GARETH MURDOCK

ALESTORM

What was your way into bass?
This year, I'll have been playing bass for exactly 20 years. I was one of those kids who grew up playing many instruments, and a friend asked me to play bass in his attempted version of a nu-metal band. I had never picked up a bass before but gave it a shot anyway. We rehearsed in a church and we were terrible. Funnily enough, the first bass I actually owned was an LTD B-50. I never imagined I would still be using LTD and ESP basses to this day, I think it just happened to be the cheapest 'metal'-looking bass in the shop at the time. That LTD lasted until my early days in Alestorm, and one fateful day in Munich Airport it smashed into three parts due to some over-excited baggage handlers and me foolishly traveling with it in a soft case. Since then, I had a short stint playing Dean basses, I had a Spire bass, and a couple of John Entwistle signatures. They didn't travel too well either, so I returned to the guaranteed reliability of ESP and LTD.

What bass gear do you currently use?
I'm currently playing what I consider to be my dream bass, the LTD AP-4 Black Metal series. I always wanted something lightweight with a single EMG and only a volume knob. It packs power, though, and through a Darkglass B7K Ultra it gives me my favourite tone to date.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
I'm self-taught, so I never received much in the way of advice. I'm always told by our producer to batter the hell out of the strings when I play, though, which I do.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
I can't say who is, or was the greatest. My favourite bass player of all time is Brown Mark, Prince's original bass player. He's an amazing funk player, a workhorse and a lovely bloke too. I gave him an Alestorm album once and he stuck it on in his car.

Where can we hear you play?
Our brand new album, *Curse Of The Crystal Coconut*, is out now, featuring my favourite bass sound to date. At the time of this interview, there are some uncertainties about gigs happening due to the apocalypse, so, er... Just buy the album for now!

www.facebook.com/alestormband

Elliot Vernon

DAVID ADAMIAK

COVET

Daniel Gray

What was your way into bass?
When I was about 15 and wanted to start playing music, I asked my dad if it would make more sense to pick up guitar or bass, as he played both. His response was quick: bass. As he put it, "There will always be a bunch of guitarists, and a bunch of drummers, but only a few bass players." Boy, was he right! I had the good fortune of learning to play on my dad's 1966 Fender Mustang, one of those short-scale guys with the tiny split-coil pickup! I then played a Music Man double humbucker Sterling for 10 years or so.

What bass gear do you currently use?
My current recording and live bass is my Fiesta Red F Bass BN-4 through a large pedal rig which includes a host of stomps from companies like ZVex, Earthquaker Devices, MXR, Meris and others. I run through an Ampeg 4x10 cab and a PF-500 solid-state head for my live amp.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Paul 'Polo' Jones, a great session player who I had the luck to encounter when I first started playing, gave me a great tip for live performance. He said, "If you want to play live and be entertaining, practise standing up so that when you play for people you have no doubts about how to move your body."

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
There have been so many great players who were perfect for the music they were making and performing that it makes me wonder if there is any true number one in any objective sense. J.S. Bach's left hand was pretty dope, but if I had to choose a specific bass player I guess I would have to say Jaco. His work with Joni Mitchell and Weather Report shows his skills as a collaborator; his solo music speaks to his capacity as a composer; and his playing just as a standalone bass player was ridiculous.

Where can we hear you play?
My band Covet is about to release a new record titled *Technicolor*. We could be touring as soon as mid/late summer depending on the status of things with the coronavirus. Whenever things officially clear up with regards to the virus, you'll be able to find us on the road quite a bit in this coming year!

Instagram: @quickdra

VINCENT 'JAKE' JONES

AETHER REALM

What was your way into bass?
For Christmas, when I was 12, I got one of those Ibanez starter packs. It came with a Gio bass, the cheapest bass they make, a little 10-watt amp, and a DVD with some lessons. My sister had wanted to get a guitar and I decided I wanted to be different, so I had to get a bass. The Gio came with a painfully high action. "I just like my action really high," was my way of saying "I don't know how to lower my action". The only other one I've ever owned is the same one I've had since I was 15, an Ibanez Soundgear Series SR-905. Five strings, neck-thru construction, and heavy as hell.

What bass gear do you currently use?
My live rig is pretty simple. I've got one of those DiMarzio straps that permanently screws on, and releases with clips on the strap itself. Before that, my bass would constantly come loose from the strap and leave me having to hold the entire weight of the bass while still fretting with my left hand. I run into a Line 6 G50 wireless pack gaffa-taped to my strap. Then I go into a Tech 21 Sansamp Bass Driver, set so that it clanks just enough, then straight into the PA.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
"Hey, Jake, can you play a little less? Maybe stick a little closer to the root note?" That was Alan Gill, the bandleader for the old church band I played in as a teenager. I used to constantly be arpeggiating up and down, or throwing some slap bass in sections that didn't need it at all. The best thing you can do is serve the song. There will always be moments for you to show off a bit – just not all the time.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Cliff Burton hooked me in with 'Anesthesia (Pulling Teeth)', and it helped that he was in my favourite band as a kid. Victor Wooten is in the running, too. But if I have to pick the greatest, I'm going with Wojtek Pilichowski. I don't know anything about the dude other than watching him play on YouTube at NAMM, but he makes sounds on that thing that no human should be able to make.

Where can we hear you play?
I play bass and yell on the upcoming Aether Realm album, *Redneck Vikings From Hell*, and I've done that on all our previous albums as well. I get to noodle on our song 'Slave To The Riff', otherwise I'm usually just holding it down with that clanky metal bass tone.

Instagram: @OlBigLeg

Lisa Jablonski

CHLOE PEACOCK

UNKLE BOB

What was your way into bass?
My whole family are professional musicians in the classical world, but my dad was a huge fan of 60s and 70s rock and folk music and used to take us to loads of concerts. I remember he took us to a Rolling Stones gig at Wembley when I was seven and it had a huge impact. I was completely blown away by the atmosphere and performance, and I remember thinking, 'I want to do this!' I carried on with classical music for a while on cello until one day at school, aged 13, I went to the music department with a group of friends. They all picked their instruments and the only thing left was the bass guitar. My friend Steph who played guitar looked at me, looked at the bass and said 'Pick it up, Chlo – you play cello, you'll be fine!' She was right. I was hooked and asked for a bass for my birthday that year. Thanks, Steph – I owe you.

I had a Mexican Fender Jazz for a while when I was at college, and I used the P-Bass that belonged to Echo & The Bunnymen when Unkle Bob recorded our second album, *Shockwaves*. My gear just wasn't sounding quite right, and the band kept their instruments in store at the recording studio we were using. That made me realise I really needed a vintage Precision. Basses and instruments in general are just tools for a job, and while of course it's wonderful to play a really gorgeous instrument, the real tone is in your fingers and your brain. Having said that, there are instruments that really feel like they were made for you, even when they weren't. When you find them, never let them go.

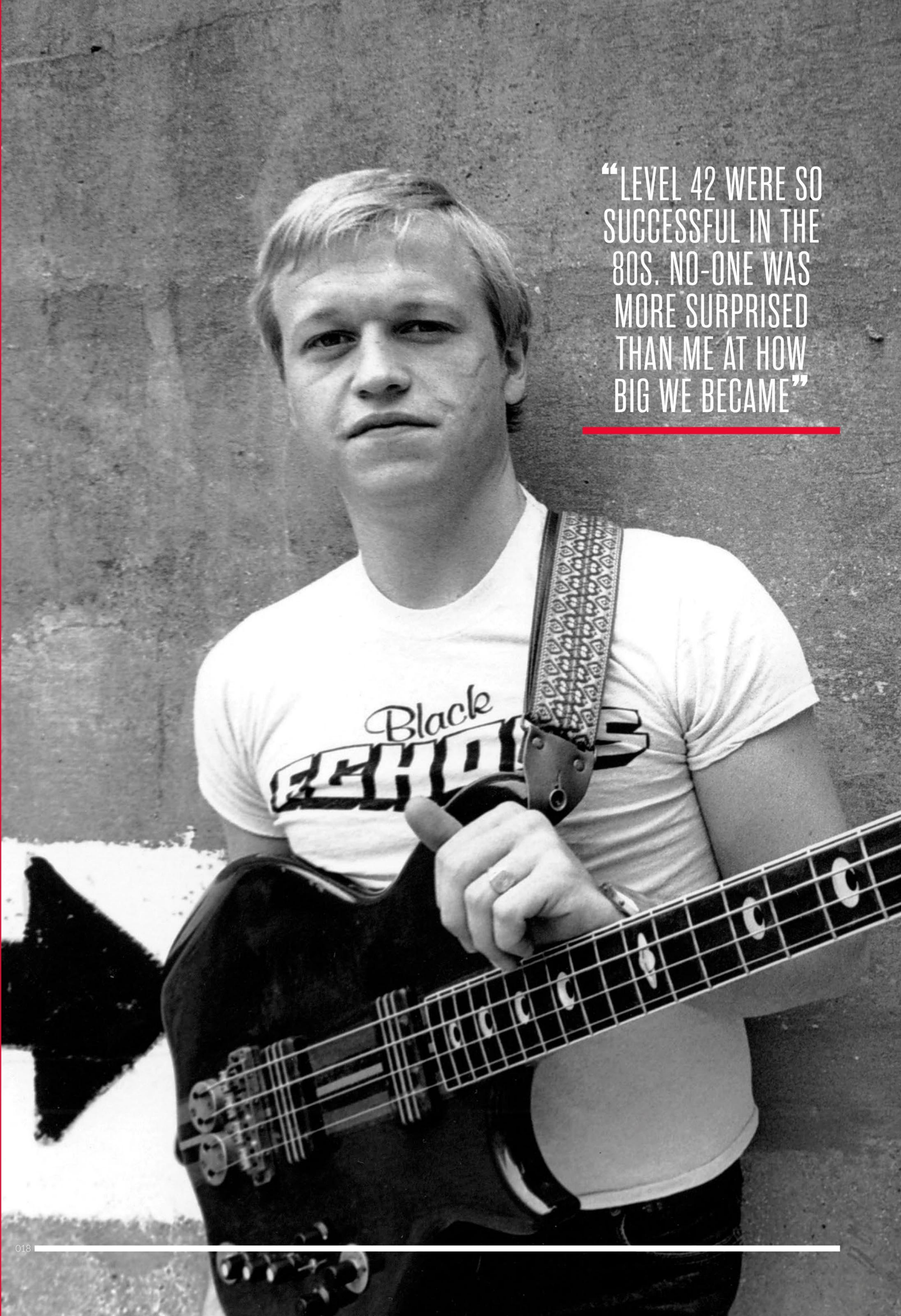
What bass gear do you currently use?
My go-to instrument is my 1979 USA Fender Precision in Wine Red. It's the instrument I got after the recording session for *Shockwaves*, when the boys and I realised that I had to get a P-Bass. It's an absolutely stunning instrument, and definitely feels like it was built for me. I'm also endorsed by Overwater, who made me a beautiful four-string J series. That bass has a set of Dunlop Super Bright strings which are beautiful and zingy. Amps-wise, I use an Aguilar Tone Hammer 350 head with an SL112 cab. They are phenomenal amps.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Bass playing is a philosophy just as much as anything, and knowing when to be quiet is golden. Stare at your drummer's foot and get locked in. The magic really happens when you get so tight with the drums that you disappear.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Tina Weymouth of Talking Heads and John McVie of Fleetwood Mac are the bassists that I come back to again and again. Their ability to play two notes and making them sound like the most insane thing you've ever heard is mind-blowing.

Where can we hear you play?
My band Unkle Bob have just announced a re-release of our debut EP *The Hit Parade* on all online outlets.

www.unklebob.com



"LEVEL 42 WERE SO SUCCESSFUL IN THE 80S. NO-ONE WAS MORE SURPRISED THAN ME AT HOW BIG WE BECAME"

IT WAS FORTY YEARS AGO TODAY…

Words: Joel McIver Photos: Getty

...that Mark King's flying thumb first blew our minds and, in doing so, opened up a whole new era for the bass guitar. As Level 42 celebrate their fourth decade in business, we sit down with King and take a look back — with the benefit of 2020 vision

Mark King has been on the cover of this magazine quite a few times in its existence, and as befits a bass player of his profile, when interviewing him we'd normally take him out to dinner, do a photoshoot in a posh hotel, quaff a series of fine cocktails and generally behave in a thoroughly celebratory manner. Today, though – or rather on April 22, 2020, some weeks at least before you read this – he and I are sitting at our computers in our respective home offices. That's the current pandemic for you.

Still, though, there's an air of celebration throughout our chat: King's band, Level 42, have reached their 40th anniversary this year. What better time to look back at a career at the cutting-edge of bass guitar?

First off, it emerges that Level 42 have been hit by the same wave of gig cancellations as every other performing band. This virus is no respecter of anniversaries, apparently. "We've had so many shows drop off the calendar because of lockdown, but obviously we're not alone there," explains King. "It's happened for so many bands, but we had a particularly busy year set up. We had a big Australasian tour, with 10 shows in Japan, three shows in Australia, a show in New Zealand and a show in Singapore: they went straight away. We were doing an orchestrated thing with the BBC

Concert Hall on 16 March, too, but that didn't happen for obvious reasons."

King is also fairly confident that he and his family also got a dose of Covid-19 themselves, although it's difficult to be sure about that given the current test-free situation in this country. "It was the strangest feeling," he tells us. "My wife, Ria, my daughter, Marlee, and I all had a cough, and painful arms. You know when bullies at school used to give you a dead arm? It felt like that. And the other weird thing is that it came in waves, so you'd be all right for a bit – and then it felt like someone yanking your spine out. Thank goodness we came out the other side of it."

Like most of us, he's counting his blessings, not least because he was able to play online gigs for events such as Camp Bestival. Check YouTube and you'll see him and Marlee delivering a bass and vocal duo performance, aided by backing tracks, from his home studio on the Isle of Wight on April 12.

"It was great to do Camp Bestival," says King. "Everybody has to be proactive at a time like this. It's no good just sitting back and wondering what might happen, and fortunately I can perform in the studio. I've got three cameras set up here and they're great quality, not that you could have seen anything before I cleared everything out a while back. There was so much gear in there that I couldn't physically get inside."

That's 40 years of being in a band for you, we suppose. "I've still got a garage full of it," he chuckles. "I upgraded the studio computer three months ago. I have a Mac Pro and an Apollo X16 interface, but even after the upgrade I still had the old Mac Pro sitting there. You think to yourself 'I'm upgrading just to see how this goes, I'd better keep the old systems standing by'. I had 16 guitar cases standing in the corner and a palette of 5000 DVDs of the last tour we did. It was just chaos. In the end I filled up two skips with junk and added industrial shelving. It's been a real game-changer."

Talking of gear, King has switched to a new Status Graphite bass and a new go-to amp since we last spoke to him. The former is a headed instrument, based on a relatively little-known but acclaimed bass. "It was inspired by Trace Elliot's T-Bass from 1996," he explains, reaching over to show the bass to the camera. "When the Gizmodrome project happened three years ago, I was in the studio with my usual Kingbass, working with Stewart Copeland, Adrian Belew and Vittorio Cosma and yes, I'm Mark King and I'm known for slap bass, but that wasn't the gig. I found myself using a pick as much

"EVERYONE HAS TO BE PRODUCTIVE AT A TIME LIKE THIS. IT'S NO GOOD SITTING BACK, WONDERING WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN"

Above: King delivers the funk on an Alembic Series II, 1988

as fingers because the music needed that kind of hard attack."

He continues: "There was a 1967 Jazz bass hanging around in the studio we were recording in, so I pulled that out – and straight away, that sound was much more suitable. I gave Rob Green at Status Graphite a call and asked him if he could do something more retro, like the T-Bass, which I'd used on one of [Sting guitarist] Dominic Miller's solo albums. I loved the sound and it was so easy to record with, and it slaps great too, so I ended up using it with Level 42. And there's a new version on the way – Rob was just finishing off the next evolution of this bass before we went into lockdown. He offered me the chance to make it headless, but there's something about the gravity and the density of having a headstock. If you chop the end off, it's going to affect the sound somehow."

The new amp, a Markbass, was chosen to complement the warm tones of the new bass, King explains. "It's a new model, the Little Mark Vintage, that Marco [De Virgiliis, Markbass owner] was excited about. It's quite retro, with a lovely, warm sound which suits the T-Bass very well. I had a Markbass rig in the early 2000s, and a head that I'd carry around as a backup, which was very light and portable – I've always really liked them. This one is a new model which coincided with me leaving TC Electronic. The only change I've made to it is that because there are so many transients in the way I play, I asked them to knock up a 1000-watt head instead of the regular 500, for some extra headroom. Other than that, I'm still using Rotosound strings, of course – those guys have always been there for me – and Radial Design too. I always have loads of Radial bits knocking about."

With 40 years' worth of bass gear around, does King ever sell any of it on eBay when he no longer needs it? "No – because most of the stuff has been given to me by sponsors, and as an endorsee I don't think it's right to sell it, just because I've moved on. For example, Rob Green comes up with three or four basses each year for me, so over the years I've had an awful lot of instruments. If I sold them, it would impact on Rob's sales, so I use them for charitable donations. I've donated them as fundraisers for Nordhoff-Robbins and for

Beaulieu Respite Care here on the island, where I'm a patron – that seems to be the best way to do it. You'll recall that your magazine organised a Music Man bass for me from [Ernie Ball's UK distributor] Strings & Things; it was very nice of them to send me one. I took it to a Children In Need event where it was auctioned and made £10,000, which was incredible."

Switching to the subject of Level 42, King is in a rather different position in 2020 than he was as a 21-year-old back in 1980. For starters, he manages the band: "I've done that since I got the name back and got the band going again in 2002," he explains. So how does the musical landscape appear to him these days, current crisis aside?

"It seems that 2020 is going to be the year that never was, but that aside I'm very happy with things," he says. "Level 42 were so successful in the 80s – and believe me, no-one was more surprised than me at how big the band became, with arena tours and bucketloads of album sales – which was wonderful. That all stopped in 1994 because I pulled the plug on it. The whole music landscape had changed."

What changed, exactly? "The record companies and publishers that we were working with started losing faith in us because album sales had dipped," he explains. "I suppose it's the same in any kind of business – people always want to see business expand rather than reduce. I remember going to see [A&R executive] Clive Black at EMI around 1994; he played me 'Lucky' by Lewis Taylor, which is a fantastic song that blew me away. I said, 'What are you going to do with that?' and he said 'I love it, but I haven't got a clue. After this meeting I've got to go and talk to the suits, who are going to say 'Last year you made this much money, Clive. This is how much we expect you to make this year. How are you going to do that?' He didn't think he could do it with a track like 'Lucky', which was disappointing, although it wasn't entirely unexpected because I know what record companies are like."

The early to mid-90s were a strange time for popular music, as readers with long memories will recall. In a short period of time – say 1991 to 1994 – 80s pop was made to look obsolete overnight thanks to grunge, alternative music and the beginnings of Oasis-style lad-rock. Fortunately for King, he saw it coming, unlike many of his contemporaries.

"WHAT GOES UP MUST COME DOWN — I'M GRATEFUL WE MAINTAINED IT AS LONG AS WE DID"

"The massive success that Level 42 enjoyed during the 80s never seemed inevitable to me," he muses. "I knew it would change at some point, simply because it always does. What goes up must come down. I'm really grateful that we were able to maintain it as long as we did, because we went through line-up changes and the loss of Alan Murphy [Level 42 guitarist who died in 1989] and so many other setbacks. They would have made a lot of bands throw their hands in the air and quit.

"All that being the case, 1994 seemed like a good time to try and do something else, so I released my solo album, *One Man*, in 1998. When I started touring with it, it was a much more scaled-back affair than the Level 42 experience had been, because I was playing to audiences of 600 to 1000 people. The budget wasn't there [for a large crew] because of the fees I was being paid by the promoters – but I absolutely adored that experience because it was a great leveller. It's important as an artist to realise that your audience isn't waiting for you, because somebody else will come along."

Here in 2020, what advice does King have for readers of this magazine about making a living in the music industry? "Well, how it will all unfold in the future, I don't know, because the whole scene has changed," he says. "But there are certain business skills that everybody needs. For example, when we tour I always work on a guaranteed fee from the promoter. I have to have that guarantee, because then I know what my budget is and I know what I can pay the guys in the band and the crew. All the things that have to be done – production, catering, lights, the whole thing – you've got to know that you can cover that: if you throw caution to the wind, you could easily go bust."

The new Status Graphite T-Bass in action, 2019

A lot of musicians focus more on being creative than on the financial housekeeping of a business – accounts, book-keeping, managing tax and so on. Should more of us acquire these skills? "It would seem to me to be a necessity," he says. "Of course, you can get accountants and you can get managers, but to me those were things that I could do myself because I was always interested in them. When somebody offers you a contract, read through it. It may seem really wordy and verbose, but stick with it and make sure you understand it. Record companies and publishers always used to insist that you got a lawyer involved, so they couldn't be held over a barrel if you later said that you didn't understand what was signed. At the same time, legal costs can take a big chunk of your income – so if you can cover that stuff yourself, you're off to a better start. I was happy to do that and get stuck in, but I know a few musicians who don't want to know."

What advice would he give his 21-year-old self if he could travel back 40 years? "Actually, I don't think I'd give him advice," he reasons, "but I'd certainly tell him that he was going to have the best time. I'd say 'Some amazing things lie ahead of you, so don't take any of them for granted'. For me, the high points were playing with amazing musicians and travelling the world. I grew up on a prison estate on the Isle Of Wight and my ancestors were farmers who never left the village they grew up in. It was scary, in a way. My grandparents lived at opposite ends of the same street here, got married, built a house on the same street and died on that street. My aunt was born and died in the same house, too. I find all that a little depressing when there are so many amazing things to see in the world. Going to Europe for the first time, and seeing the different cultures, was wonderful. Meeting German and French and Scandinavian people was incredible. Don't get me started on Brexit... So many people have had that opportunity taken away from them."

Thanks for the interview, Mark, we tell him: there's plenty of home truths for us all to digest. He laughs; "Well, that's the wonderful thing about getting to 61. You say what you want – and people can either take it or leave it!"

BEHIND THE WALL OF SOUND

Words: Joel McIver
Photos: Lynda Kay

You think you know who the late, great Ian 'Lemmy' Kilmister of Motörhead was? We thought so too, until we met the singer-songwriter Lynda Kay, who reveals a tender side to the great man that we never knew existed

The acclaimed singer, guitarist and actor Lynda Kay was born in Dallas, Texas and resides in Los Angeles, appropriately so as she has been a regular on the music scene and on TV shows such as Amazon Prime's *Goliath* for many years. Along the way, she struck up a close friendship with the late Motörhead singer Lemmy, a hero in our world – not just for his unique bass playing, but also for the sheer force of his intellect and personality.

Kay's new album, *Black And Gold*, features a beautifully heartfelt duet with the man himself called 'The Mask' – required listening for anyone interested in his more introspective side. Here, Kay recalls her many memories of life with the last true rock star.

How did you first meet Lemmy, Lynda?
My husband Jonny and I own Coffin Case, the guitar case company, and Jonny knew Lemmy because Motörhead was sponsored by Coffin and he had a great relationship with him and his management. I met Lemmy through Coffin, and I was in a roots duo called the Lonesome Spurs with Danny B. Harvey, the guitarist who played with him in Headcat. I knew Slim Jim Phantom too, the drummer. I'd be at a lot of the Headcat shows and I was the little Angie Dickinson to their Rat Pack, I guess. In 2006, Lemmy came to one of our shows and was very impressed. I was playing guitar, singing and playing a suitcase kick drum, and he told me 'You keep good time!'

Lemmy was 61 in 2006. Was he in good shape?
He was in great shape. He looked great, he felt great, and he was still living the rock'n'roll life – he was prime Lemmy! From there we ended up hitting it off, and we developed a friendship, and he invited me over to his place to hang out. I was like 'Sure!', and went over to the classic apartment that he had in West Hollywood. I'm sure you've heard about that apartment – it was pretty wild. It featured heavily in the *Lemmy* documentary that was being made at the time, and I got to know the directors.

What was the lair of Lemmy like?
The first time I was there, it was scary as hell to see all the things that he had in the apartment. He had so many knives – hundreds, of all different sizes. They were lined up on the walls, diagonally. It was really intense, and it freaked me out so much because they were all over the walls, everywhere. He also kept every piece of fan art that anyone ever made for him – every single piece. He had them in glass cases all around his apartment, to honour the work of these people. It was really something. The first time I came over I had a Ramones T-shirt on and he said 'That's a good band. This one's better. Here' and he pulled out a Motörhead shirt and gave it to me. It had silver foil lettering and he said 'This here is the executive model!'

Did you ask him why he collected knives?
One time I asked him 'What's up with all the knives, man?' and he was like 'Oh, okay', and told me that they were a collection from Nazi Germany. He had swords and all kinds of other stuff too. He went over to the corner of the living room, where there was a big bucket containing several swords, and said 'Look, I wanna show you some of these'. He picked up this sword and wielded it while standing over me. He looked like a wild man as he was describing it.

Getty

He said 'Look, this one's got a blade up on top and this has one on the bottom, so that you can stick it in somebody and then pull it out', and I was like, 'Okay, that's enough'. He said, 'Am I scaring you?' I laughed and said 'No, but I gotta know – why do you collect all these things? Why?' He set the sword down and very sombrely said, 'So that nobody else can be hurt by these weapons any more'. He collected them to keep them out of the hands of people who would use them to do harm.

Is it true that he was a highly literate man?
Yes. He had an insane collection of books, because he was an avid reader – really into history. He was very worried that history would repeat itself and that we would have to learn the same lessons all over again. He would read to me from poetry books, mostly by old English poets. He would read prose too. I remember looking at him while he was reading to me, and it occurred to me that he could have been a pirate or a cowboy in a different era in history – but he would always have been a force of a man. He had this huge book on astrology, which fascinated him. He would say 'Look! This shows the birthdays of different people in history' and then look at me with those crazy eyes. He said 'I share a birthday with Nostradamus!' He loved that, and I loved that he loved it. He was such a renaissance man.

"LEMMY REALLY LIKED TO GIVE WOMEN A CHANCE TO SHINE"

What else was he into?
He also loved the TV series *Law And Order*, which I loved too because I went to law school. He thought that was so badass and said 'But you didn't practise law, huh?' and I said no, because I hated lawyers, ha ha! He loved rock documentaries too: *Behind The Music* was big at the time. What was hilarious was if there was anything wrong, that he could correct from his own experience, he would be like 'Fuck that!' and he would pause it and tell me the real story. 'You wanna know what really happened?' It was hysterical.

How would you describe his politics?
He was a very liberal, 'live and let live' person. He told me 'I don't give a shit if people are gay. Who cares?' He was just a really genuine, good-hearted man who had a heart of gold. He had a really special warm spot for women, especially when it came to giving women a platform in rock'n'roll. He thought that women had it tough in rock music, and he said 'They're better than men. They look cooler when they're doing it, too'. He was very supportive. 'Women find it harder to rise above the noise and the bullshit' was how he put it. He was also a big supporter of Children Of The Night, a charity for runaways who are trafficked into prostitution. Although he had a reputation as a ladies' man, a lot of women would come over and just hang out – nothing else would happen. He enjoyed their company because, he said, they listened. They could have a conversation, whereas around men he always felt like he was in some sort of masculine competition and he had to keep up a front. With women, he didn't have to do that. He could relax and just be who he was – gentle and humorous.

What about his relationships?
One time when I was over there he handed me a letter, which had his wax seal on it on the back – yes, he had his own wax seal. He had written an address on it, in beautiful handwriting, and he asked if I would mail it for him. I said I would. I mailed several letters to her from him. I'll never tell who those letters were to, and I don't think anybody else knows who she was. I can tell you that he was totally in love with her, though. She cared for him as a friend, but she didn't feel that way for him, so it was an unrequited love. I treasure that trust that he had in me.

Tell us about the song you recorded together.
One night in 2007, I was working on a duet with Billy Bob Thornton, a good friend of mine. He and I ended up recording a song that I wrote and it came out on an album in 2009 called *Dream My Darling*. I had just finished recording that duet at Billy's house, which was Slash's old house in Beverly Hills and had a recording studio in the basement. It was really late when we finished, and when we left I was supposed to go and meet Jonny at the Whiskey where his friend's band was playing. So I drove down to Sunset and parked a couple of doors down from the Rainbow, and as I walked past the Rainbow I thought 'I'll just stop by and say hi to Lemmy, he's always in there playing video poker'. I walked in and went up to him and he said 'Hey, Lyn – where you been?' I told him I'd been recording a duet with Billy Bob Thornton and he was like, 'Oh yeah? Well, when are *we* gonna do a duet?' I said 'Tonight?' and he laughed. About a week later he asked me to come and hang out, and to bring him a loaf of bread and a gallon of milk – which was very typical, by the way.

You used to buy groceries for him?
Every time I would go over there I'd always ask him if he wanted me to bring him anything. Inevitably it was a loaf of white bread and a gallon of whole milk, and when I was there I would make him a bite to eat, too. The only thing he ever had in the fridge was steak, so he taught me how to fry up a good steak the way he liked it. His kitchen was an absolute wreck except for when I visited him, because I would clean it. The man was a bachelor, and I was like, 'You know what, he's not gonna clean this kitchen – ever'. He would be like, 'Get out of there, what are you doing? Don't clean my kitchen!' and I'd be like 'Okay!', while cleaning his kitchen, ha ha!

That is surreal.
Yeah! The other thing was that I never saw the man drink any water, and I asked him about that one time. He said 'I don't need water, I've got ice in my Jack Daniels and Coke', which he had going all the

time, although I noticed that he wasn't always drinking it – it was just sitting there. He would sip on it but he wasn't always drinking it. So when he asked me to freshen up his drink, I would water it down and add extra ice! Ha ha! He never knew. I loved that.

You helped him without him knowing it.
Hey man, I've got as big a heart as he did, and I wanted him to be around as long as possible, because I loved him to death. Anyway, when we started talking about doing a song, he told me that he had a song already. 'I started it in 1979,' he told me. 'It's called 'The Mask''. So I said 'Great!', and next time I went over to his place, he pulled out his guitar and started playing. He had the remnants of a song that he'd started back then but never finished.

What's the song about?
He never told me who the song was originally about, and I didn't ask, because he was really private about his love life, especially when it came to women who were lovers from his past. He did tell me once about Susan, the girl who died of a heroin overdose: he was so in love with her, absolutely head over heels. It broke his heart when she died. He told me 'I never got over her'. It was tragic. She was the reason he was still alive, he said: she was the first person he ever knew who died of a heroin overdose, and for that reason he never took it. 'I understood how deadly that drug was', he said. And he saw Jimi Hendrix take it, when he was a roadie for Jimi, and he hated it for that reason too.

Did you ever see Lemmy do drugs?
He used to talk about speed, but he never did it around me. And he never ever made a pass at me, by the way. He wouldn't have even dreamed of it, because I was Jonny's wife, and he and Jonny were friends.

The song is great.
Thank you. He really liked to give women a chance to shine, so he gave me the song to sing: he allowed me to put it on my album. We shared the songwriting credits, but the recording itself, he gave it to me, which was very sweet. He knew it wouldn't go on any of Motörhead's records because it just wasn't their style. I loved it for the revealing nature of the lyrics. He knew that people always reveal who they are, even though they try to hide.

It sounds like you and he had a special friendship.
It was really special: we really had a good time together. I last saw him in 2011, when he was beginning to be unwell. His health declined quite quickly. The last time I saw him was after a Headcat show at the Roxy. I remember he said to me, 'You don't smoke, do you?' I had a cigarette in my hand at the time, and I said, 'Yes, occasionally'. He said, 'Don't smoke, Lyn. You're too pretty – don't smoke'. That stuck with me, and I quit not long after. I remember when he said goodbye to me that day: he said 'I'll see you, Lyn'. I had this feeling right then that it would be the last time I saw him, and as I left, his girlfriend Cheryl Keuleman was coming in, and that was the first time I'd met her. I was really glad to meet her, and happy for him that he had a woman in his life.

These are amazing memories. Thank you for sharing them with us, Lynda.
I want people to know what a special person he was – a kind, gentle soul who genuinely, deeply cared about people. I hope people never forget him.

'The Mask' is available for download at www.lyndakay.com

PASS NOTES

ASHLEY REEVE

Welcome to Pass Notes, our new advice column in which we ask a renowned bass player for tips about how to make it as a musician. This month: Cher bassist Ashley Reeve

"I've just moved to Las Vegas because it has such an incredible live music scene," says Ashley Reeve, who currently holds down the low end in the world's biggest arenas with the perennial Cher. "I can go on the road and then, when I come home, I can hit the ground running because there's so much great live work here." A devotee of Aguilar amps, Reeve also generates the low notes via a superbly tricked-out Dingwall bass. "I want people to know that Dingwall is much more than just a rock bass company," she says. "The beauty of playing Dingwall basses with an artist like Cher is that I can demonstrate their versatility. By toggling the rotary selector to the neck pickup, you can get an incredible vintage tone with a tight bottom end." Beyond the topic of tone, how else can she advise bassists about their way into the industry?

AFFORDABLE DOESN'T MEAN CHEAP

Don't focus on having the most expensive, boutique bass. I grew up playing basic Peavey and Squier basses, and they're great instruments: they got me through the better part of my education. Your talent is all in your hands – you can make a $200 bass sound really great, if you know what you're doing and you know what tone you're looking for. If a bass feels good in your hands, buy that. Go to a guitar store, put a blindfold on and have someone hand you five basses. Pick the one that sounds and feels the best. I literally got blindfolded and chose my bass!

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USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO YOUR ADVANTAGE, NOT YOUR DISADVANTAGE

Posting videos of your playing is a great way to share with the cyber-world what you're capable of – but don't get so locked into it that you forget to play with real people. Find real bands to play with, ideally featuring musicians who are better than you are. They can only make you a better player. Over time, their feel becomes something you're a part of. I've played with great drummers that were so beyond me, but over time I no longer felt like I was being bulldozed over… I was one with them. It can be scary, but it's worth it.

KNOW YOUR WORTH

We all have to pay our dues, playing for practically nothing at the beginning – but as you grow, don't be afraid to ask for the money you'd feel more comfortable making when someone asks for your rate. If everyone worked for free, then the bar would be really low for all of us and no one would make any money. Most of us are our own managers, so it's important to have an idea of what you'd like to be making. Sometimes we have to compromise, but make sure you always have a bottom line. Eventually, someone may offer more than you've ever made – and it feels like Christmas. Your rate just went up!

FIND THE RIGHT PLACE TO LIVE

You've got to live in a town that has a booming music scene. Immerse yourself in an environment that has the jobs you're looking for, and the people you can connect with, because it's all about networking. You need courage to do this – it's a leap of faith – but it's a worthy gamble. Los Angeles is a great place for connecting. It's where a lot of people source bands for major pop acts. Nashville has an incredible scene, it's great for singer-songwriters and country bands. But if you're in a really small town, don't give up – take every opportunity to play that you can. That might mean your local church to start with, then you can branch out.

BECOME FRIENDS WITH THE PEOPLE WHOSE JOBS YOU ASPIRE TO

I was lucky because I grew up in L.A., so my network was at my feet. I went to the Los Angeles High School For The Arts, surrounded by people who were on the rise and already connected, so I was able to build my network from the time I was in high school. My early recommendations came from those friends that I knew in high school and at Cal Arts when I went to college, so I'm a rarity, but I think it's still something that anyone can do. Go to shows and try and meet the right people. Make sure you attend the aftershow meet-and-greet where you can connect with these people and pick their brains.

ASK FOR HELP

Ask people who inspire you for information and knowledge, because that's how we all grow. Ask if they need a sub, too. Building a sub relationship builds trust, and in the event that a bassist gets too busy with something else, that gig may become yours. Take lessons with people too – there's no shame in that. I even asked Jimmy Johnson for a lesson and he shot me down, but that was only because he doesn't do lessons, ha ha!

Twitter and Instagram: @ashleyreevebass

Chris Reeve

Enter Sandbergman

Swedish bassist Victor Brandt is a veteran of Scandinavian metal – so it's about time he got his own suitably heavyweight signature axe. We meet the metal maestro

If you've missed out on the pleasures of Scandinavian extreme metal, you might be surprised to learn just how important a presence this music has in the world of unsociably loud music. Just as the terms 'West Coast psychedelia' or 'British modern jazz' refer to a particular era and flavour of sounds, and purists would be horrified if you applied them incorrectly, the subgenres of Norwegian black metal and Swedish death metal have their own specific connotations.

If you're oblivious to these distinctions and would rather just read about bass, that's fine and dandy, and leads us to the subject of Victor Brandt, a highly affable Swedish gentleman to whom the preceding paragraph is particularly relevant. His career has covered spells in major acts from both the black and death metal worlds, a surprisingly infrequent crossover considering the similar DNA of both sounds. Brandt is currently a member of Dimmu Borgir, superstars of Norwegian BM, and recalls how simple it was to switch genres and countries, both musically and linguistically.

"I've been in Dimmu Borgir for around three years, and before that I was in Entombed AD, the Swedish band," he explains. "Switching from a Swedish to a Norwegian band was easy. In fact, I've done it before – I was in Satyricon for two years and lived in Norway at the time. The languages are quite similar, maybe 75 percent identical, so they ask me a question in Norwegian and I'll reply in Swedish."

Asked about his early influences on bass, he defaults to the standard metal canon: "Lemmy, of course, and Geezer Butler. They weren't the most technical bass players but I listen to their songs, and to their bands, over and over." However, Brandt also departs from the usual metal influences, adding: "I also enjoyed the more technical bass players – Jaco Pastorius, Stanley Clarke, Victor Wooten and so on. I went to a Swedish music school, where I chose to do a course in African-American music, which focused on blues, jazz and soul."

His origins were hardly conducive to future stage stardom, he explains. "I'm from a really small village of 800 people from the north of Sweden. I played guitar and bass when I started out, but bass felt easier and more natural. Where I lived you could choose to play music, play sports or party – those were literally my only three options – and music was what I chose. I didn't have any other interests at all. It was a blessing and a curse, I guess, but it helped me to stay focused. Unfortunately, when I made that choice, there was only one other guy in the whole village who was a musician."

Early tours taught Brandt the ropes. "I played in a bunch of small bands that made cassette demos. At one point I toured with a crust-punk band. It was tough – we played in squats in the middle of winter – but I learned a lot from it. You learn not to take anything for granted. I'm really grateful for that experience."

In that light, Satyricon – then enjoying a heightened profile – was a whole new environment for Brandt when he joined them in 2007. "It was a big step up, with a crew and a tourbus and dates in Mexico," he says. "I played bass on an EP, *My Skin Is Cold*, and their album *The Age Of Nero*. I got a Norwegian gold album for that, which was so cool."

Quitting Satyricon for pastures new in 2009, Brandt made a sideways move to a notable bunch of Swedes, simply through lucky timing. "I bumped into LG Petrov from Entombed when I was in a line for food at an airport," he remembers. "I was looking for a full-time band, and I was a big Entombed fan, so I sent him a message on Myspace and let him know that I was available if he ever needed a session bassist. I was in luck because LG needed a guy for the forthcoming tour as their current bassist was about to become a father. We played Summer Breeze and Bloodstock, and we had no time to rehearse, apart from a quick unplugged session in the hotel room, so the first time we played together was on stage. It was a bit nerve-wracking, but it worked. I played with Entombed for nine years. When the offer from Dimmu came along, I really wanted LG's blessing to take the job, so I asked him what he thought – and he said 'Go for it!'"

Over the years, has Brandt been required to adapt his bass playing to different bands? "At one point, Satyricon asked me to follow the kick drums, which could be real fast at times, but that was the only time that I had to take a different approach between one band and another. I basically use the same approach – and also the same sound, I guess. I've been happily surprised that, even with so much going in Dimmu's music, which is highly symphonic, I could squeeze in some nice bass parts."

With this amount of high-profile work on his resume, it's little surprise that Brandt is toting some tasty bass gear. "My main bass is my new signature Sandberg, which was just announced back in February," he says with justifiable pride. "I was with Warwick for 14 years, and they make great basses and they're a great company, but I got an offer from Sandberg for a signature model – and that's a dream come true."

He adds: "It's their Forty-Eight model with a reversed headstock and a classic-rock pickup setup, with passive P and

J pickups. They have a new preamp, too, which has bass, high-mid and low-mid pots, but no treble pot, which helps to cut through the mix. Everything is black, with an ebony fretboard. Mine is a four-string but you can order a five-string version if you want. It has my signature branded on the back of the headstock and Dimmu Borgir runes on the pickguard as an optional extra. There's an all-black one and an aged-finish one."

You'll notice an especially heavy-metal addition to the signature Brandt bass if you look carefully, he chuckles. "The J pickup is in the shape of an inverted cross, ha ha! The two pieces on the side that make the cross shape aren't actually part of the pickup, it's just that the pickup cover is shaped that way."

His other gear is state of the art, too. "We use Jerry Harvey Audio in-ear monitors, Richter straps, DR strings, Klotz cables, and Darkglass pedals and amps – they make you sound good effortlessly. I use a Klotz passive DI, a Darkglass B7K as a DI, and a DSM Noisemaker as a cabinet simulator – so I'm using three XLR cables from the pedalboard. Maybe it's overkill to have both in-ears and the amp on stage, but it's really nice to have the air blowing out of the amp."

Many modern bass players make their living with several bands: what advice does Brandt have for us about adapting our playing to suit? "Well, I have my personal preference that I start with, and if I feel that I should make some changes to fit in, I'll do that. If I'm playing in a band that has existed for many years, of course I'm very open to their preferences. I've been fortunate enough to play with very cool people in my career, and they want everyone in the band to feel comfortable so that they can do their best." ■

www.facebook.com/victor.brandt

THIS GOES TO TWELVE

Idaho-resident bassist Mark Rowe owns what is thought to be the world's largest collection of 12-string basses. We meet him for a chat about the thang behind the twang...

How did you get into 12-string basses, Mark?
I've been playing in various rock and country bands for 40 years, and I've done well over 2000 gigs. I first got into these basses back in 1987, when I picked up a fretless Rickenbacker eight-string. That's the only fretless eight that Rickenbacker has ever built, according to the documentation. I got into it because I was living in Missoula, Montana, which is a college town with a great music scene. There weren't enough bands to go round, so I ended up playing in 14 different groups over a three-year period. A lot of those were three-piece rock bands, and although I love that format, the problem is that the sound drops out when the guitarist starts playing a solo. The eight-string was a solution because it has a bigger sound. Later, in 1999, I got into 12-string basses and I've been hooked since then – it's a real passion for me.

A lot of us are a bit intimidated by these things. Should we be?
There's definitely an intimidation factor, ha ha! I demonstrate Musicvox instruments at NAMM Shows, and a lot of male bassists are afraid to pick them up because they look scary. Women are not afraid to play them, for some reason: they come up, grab them and say 'This is cool'. I don't know why there's that difference. But the intimidation also extends to the other musicians in your band. If you're with a guitarist who's not real secure about himself, or has an overactive ego, they don't want to have to compete with this great big instrument, which sounds monstrous. That's one of the reasons, I think, why you don't see more twelves around, because guitarists think that it won't fit into their style of music.

Are they wrong to think that?
What I've discovered is that a 12-string bass actually enhances the guitar parts more than guitarists realise. I remember playing a gig where I played a four-string instead of my usual twelve, and people came up to the guitarist afterwards and said, 'What's wrong? Your guitar didn't sound as full tonight'. This was because they were used to hearing the high strings on the 12-string bass, and assuming they were guitar strings. I brought it back the following night – and the guitarist was complimented on his sound.

What are the challenges that come with these basses?
First off, they're hard to find. There may be 5000 of these at most, worldwide. Only a handful of companies build them on a production basis, among them Dean, Musicvox and Waterstone. Then there's the string tension, which is

FRONT ROW, ON FLOOR (LEFT TO RIGHT)
October Custom Explorer, Black (previously owned by John Gallagher); Galveston 1st Series Type 1, Antique Sunburst; Galveston 2nd Series, Natural; October Raven, Red; Musicvox Space Cadet 2nd Series, Super Gold Sparkle (prototype); Silver Star 1st series, Antique Sunburst (possibly unique); Galveston 1st series Type 2, Dot Inlays, Natural; DRW Instruments, Jarrah, Clear lacquer.

SECOND ROW
October Raven, Black (previously owned by John Gallagher); Waterstone TP-12/34, Transparent Orange (previously owned by Pat DiNizio); Waterstone TP-2, Cherry Red (signed by Tom Petersson); Hades, Holographic Flake (previously owned by John Gallagher); DRW Instruments Multi-Scale, Clear lacquer; Waterstone TP-12/32, Dark Blue Sparkle; Musicvox Space Cadet, Custom Interstellar Vortex design; Waterstone TP-12/32, Transparent Pink; Waterstone TP-1, Black (only 10 exist; signed by Tom Petersson); Emerald Guitars acoustic, Carbon Fiber Red (the first acoustic 12-string bass).

THIRD ROW
Musicvox Space Cadet 1st Series Ltd Edition, Seafoam Green (only nine exist); Waterstone Double-Cutaway, Natural; Hamer B12L Fretless, Candy Blue (the first fretless 12-string bass); DRW Instruments, Kauri Pine, Black; Waterstone TP-2, Yellow (signed by Tom Petersson); Hiroshigi Kids Dragon, Transparent Purple; Musicvox Space Cadet 1st Series, Sunburst; Oktober Ltd Edition, Transparent Black (only one exists); Waterstone TP-12/34, Blue Target (signed by Tom Petersson); Career, Black (only four exist); Musicvox MI-5, Super Silver Sparkle.

FOURTH ROW
Hamer CH-12, White Pearl; Whitehouse Deluxe, Transparent Black; Waterstone Ozone, Natural; Dean Rhapsody, Custom Fuschia Sparkle; Marcus Martini, Antique Sunburst; October, White; Musicvox MI-5, Sky Blue; Tennessee, Green Sparkle; Hamer B12S, Black with Custom Bogus Toms band logo; Carlo Robelli, Black Cherry; Rogue LX408 Conversion, Natural

BACK ROW
Starfire, Tobacco Sunburst; Galveston 1st Series Type 3, 5-knob electronics, Natural; Silver Star 2nd Series, Metallic Red Sparkle (possibly unique); Hamer CH-12XT, Black; Musicvox Space Cadet 2nd Series, Super Silver Sparkle; Whitehouse Sorta-Deluxe, Transparent Red; Starfire, Cherry Sunburst; Hense, Transparent Black (only eight exist); Musicvox Space Cadet 1st Series, White; J.C. Harper Custom, Transparent Mahogany; Dean Rhapsody, Transparent Black; Musicvox Space Cadet 2nd Series, Seafoam Green.

high because most of them have a 34” scale. The triple strings can be a little tough to play, especially if the bass isn’t set up with a real low action. They take some getting used to, because you need some extra finger strength.

I assume it’s best to play them with a pick?
There are some fingerstyle players out there, such as Chip Z’Nuff of Enuff Z’Nuff, but I prefer to play with a pick, because I get much better definition out of the sound that way. I started out as a finger player, and I’m not as fast with a pick, but the sound is better.

Is it important to hit all three strings in each course every time you play a note?
That is very tough to do, because you have different gauges of strings grouped together. If you play downstrokes, you’re primarily accentuating the high octave strings, whereas upstrokes hit the low strings first, so you get completely different sounds in each direction. I prefer to string my basses inverted, in other words with the fundamental strings on top. That enables you to play more chords. Typically, I play either five or eight strings at a time, even though they’re grouped in threes.

Would you use alternate tunings?
You can absolutely do that. I have one with a 35” scale, so the string tension is off the scale. For that reason I tune it B E A D and it sounds like the devil himself, believe me! Dug Pinnick of Kings X drops everything down to D, and Tom Petersson of Cheap Trick has a bass with a low G.

Presumably they take a while to tune up?
True, but most of these basses stay in tune really well. It does take me about two hours to change a set of strings, but an hour of that is getting the intonation right. The strange thing is that you don’t necessarily want these basses to be perfectly in tune. You want your fundamentals to be in tune, of course, but if you detune the octaves a tiny bit, you get a chorus effect that really thickens up the sound. It actually sounds bigger.

So these basses aren’t particularly difficult to manage, then?
Absolutely. A set of strings only costs $25 to $30 and I just use a regular amp. A 12” speaker works great with these basses. You can thicken up the sound with a stompbox of some kind, but it’s not essential: the PA will replicate the sound pretty well. You know, it’s all about your mindset. It’s gonna take some work to get your finger strength up, and you’ll have to get used to some ribbing from your band-mates who aren’t used to the sound. But they’ll come around in the end!

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Right, that's enough from me, and remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*

Joel McIver, Editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

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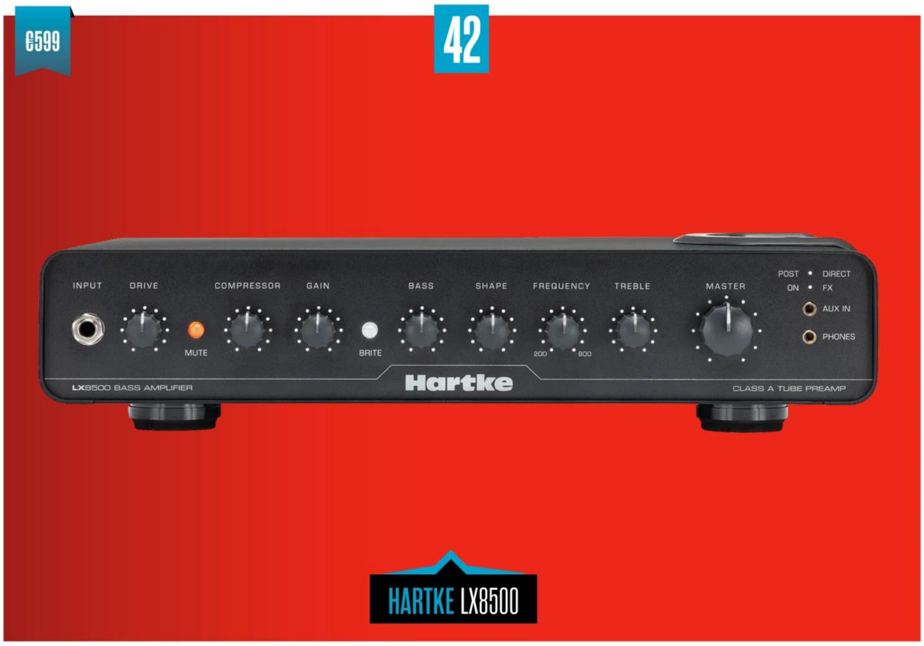

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www.marleaux-bass.com

£6750

We've seen many a Marleaux bass here over the years – and the one thing that always stands out from this German luthier is the time, effort and skill that has been employed in the design and construction of the instruments. At first sight, this semi-acoustic Contra bass seems to be no exception, with dramatic visuals that recall a classic era of German instrument construction. Needless to say, such skill and craftsmanship come at a cost – so is it worth paying?

Build Quality

The body of the Contra owes a definite tip of the hat to a violin or cello, but with a modern slant. The F-hole on the upper bout highlights its semi-acoustic properties, and the sumptuous 'old violin aged' finish over the flamed maple body and spruce top is a visual treat. The flamed maple through-neck gives the bass rigidity courtesy of the five-piece laminate: this incorporates two smoked oak veneers which are very much in keeping with the generally antique aesthetic. The well-sized headstock improves the overall balance and although the bass sits horizontally, this is rectified once placed on a strap. The black and gold hardware is top-notch too – a classy-looking instrument with bags of finesse.

Sounds and Playability

Being semi-acoustic, the Contra resonates and sustains nicely – and even without plugging the bass in, it nails its tonal intentions to the mast. The bottom end has a sublime roundness which swells as each note blooms, while the midrange has a dark quality that provides response and a low-range attack. This works with the balanced top end – and thankfully, the high mids don't contribute too much of a bark.

Plugged in, the tonal quality of the timbers begins to shine through. The detail of each note is a pleasure to hear and the harmonic response is noticeable across the whole neck. While the six-control setup looks a little fiddly, in operation it's straightforward enough. During our test, this bass doesn't suffer to any degree from howling or feedback, although the bass EQ should be added sparingly so as not to swamp the finer side of the tone. However, I was surprised by how restricted the EQ controls seemed to be – with no particular extreme in cut or boost, just a usable 'in-between' choice of settings that can be dialled in.

The pickup selector switches offer a more useful array of tones, allowing each pickup to be operated in series, parallel or single-coil mode. This supplies some significant tonal variation: single-coil mode offers the slippery, honky tones akin to a Jazz, while parallel mode provides a detailed but slinky tone to each pickup and series mode gives a power boost to either unit.

The slim but rounded neck profile is highly playable courtesy of the 40mm nut width, while the setup generally is of the highest order, as you would expect at this price. The 19mm string spacing, adjustable at the bridge, is welcome too. Despite the limited contouring to the upper bout and none at all at the rear of the body, the violin-like shape accommodates the player's body very snugly, even with those sharp-looking raised body edges. The lower cutaway benefits the player by providing unhindered access to the upper regions of the 24-fret ebony fingerboard. Gerald Marleaux should be applauded for creating such a pleasingly playable bass.

Conclusion

There's no debating the cost of this bass: £6750 is a hefty sum by anyone's standards. Many of this instrument's finer features will simply not be required by most working bass players – but if the high-end side of bass lutherie is your thing, and you can afford a break from the norm, this bass might just tick all of your boxes.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £6750
Colour | Old violin aged, satin finish
Body | Flamed maple and spruce top
Neck | Flamed maple, five-piece laminate with two smoked oak veneers, 34" scale, satin finish
Neck Joint | Through-neck
Nut Width | 40mm
Fingerboard | Ebony
Frets | 24
Pickups | Marleaux ebony humbucking pickups x 2
Electronics | Marleaux Contra 3.0 active circuit
Controls | Volume, balance, bass/treble (stacked), passive tone control, pickup coil-split switches x 2 (humbucker parallel/single-coil/humbucker series)
Hardware | ETS Contra black bridge, Schaller gold and ebony machine heads
Weight | 3.7 kg / 8.15 lbs
Case/gig bag included | Gigbag
Left-hand option available | Yes, as a custom order

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Playability; build quality
Minus | Could do with a little more tonal colouration
Overall | A fine, if unusual, example from the Marleaux stable

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■ (10/10)
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□ (8/10)
VALUE	■■■■■■■□□□ (7/10)

JACKSON
CBXM X-Series Signature David Ellefson Concert IV and V

"Hold up — that's a Jackson?" says Joe Daly, faced with the new David Ellefson basses

Fender
www.fender.com

£719
£769

As Jackson continue making serious inroads into the bass space, this new range suggests something of a paradox; as the signature model of the longtime Megadeth bassist David Ellefson, one is forgiven for assuming that the CBXM was designed with metallers in mind. Conversely, with a robust suite of tone-shaping features, there's little to suggest this new series wouldn't appeal to most other styles as well.

Gone is the iconic Jackson headstock, replaced by a more traditional design. More than a mere design choice, this nod to the old school sends a halcyon call to all bassists, with the hope that in this new series, players of all styles, genres and pedigrees will find something to love. We holed up with the four and five-string models for an extra-long test-drive to see how they measure up.

Build Quality

Beyond its shape, the headstock is notable for its size – a larger piece that not only promotes an even keel, but that helps to deliver a smooth and satisfying tone right out of the box. Oversized chrome tuners run across the top, facilitating quick in-flight adjustments, with a string tree above the nut to manage tension. The instrument boasts a heroic capacity for staying in tune amid prolonged periods of frenetic, neighbour-bothering thrashing.

The poplar body contours offer ample support along the top, and the lower contour arcs comfortably over our leg while sitting. It's quite sturdy, with a bolt-on maple neck that features 21 jumbo frets. Also, any gigging musician knows well the neck-torqueing perils of callous baggage handlers and overly-crowded load-out rooms; handily, the CBXM features a heel-mounted spoke wheel just above the bridge. This enables the player to quickly and efficiently adjust the truss rod, should any trauma befall the neck. Aesthetically, the Ellefson Series also includes a pickguard – a Jackson first – chrome hardware and Ellefson's 'Radiation' logo embossed on the truss rod cover.

Sounds and Playability

Given the price point and of course, Mr. Ellefson's pedigree, we expected high performance in the attack, and the CBXM did not disappoint. It features EMG HZ35 active humbucking pickups, with the P pulled to the back, unleashing a booming low end, and the J set in the front to deliver a sharpened attack. There's also an active three-band EQ that opens a galaxy of possibilities for tonal exploration.

Set flat, our starting point is fat, rumbling and exceedingly tasty. On the five-string, a soft push of the B string rewards us with a smooth, sonorous tone that quickly fills the room. Very few adjustments are necessary with the mids, as they tend to cut in rather sharply, in line with a metal-oriented instrument. Adjusting the EQ, we're able to move effortlessly between a jagged metal attack and a creamy blues vibe, which deepens even further when we adjust the blend knob, bringing more warmth into the mix by dialling up the neck pickup.

The HiMass bridge yields a satisfying growl and all of the sustain implied by its reputation. Pushing up the highs a bit more, the notes ring with pristine clarity through to the highest note on the G. Unsurprisingly, the CBXM is an absolute beast when it comes to harder, aggressive genres but, in line with Ellefson's own playing style, the tonal vistas are unlimited – and we have just as much fun jamming out to some dusty old Texas blues albums as we do with heavier fare.

From a playability perspective, the CBXM delivers an impressively smooth ride. The spacing between frets is generous – impressively so on the five-string. Its sleek, 12"-16" compound radius laurel fingerboard is nice and round up at the nut, fitting comfortably in the hand when sitting back in the pocket. This contour flattens as we move up the neck, allowing for a speedy ascent into the upper register – a particularly notable accommodation for musicians who play with heightened technicality or who spend a good deal of time beyond the 12th fret.

Conclusion

Both four- and five-string models proved to be boatloads of fun to play, and drew lusty compliments during jam sessions for both their sound and appearance. Ultimately, the CBXM delivers all of the design efficiencies and horsepower of an elite rock bass in a classic Precision body. Particularly on the five-string, the sheer force of the low-end attack makes it a no-brainer for metallers – but the high-quality electronics and spacious tonal palette expand the arena of possibilities for other styles as well.

We put both models through the wringer and the longer we played, the more difficult it was to put them down. The bottom line is that, with the CBXM X-Series, Jackson has delivered a sturdy, top-line instrument with above-average playability and a devastating sound to boot.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £719, £769
Made In | Indonesia
Body | Poplar
Neck | Quartersawn maple, 34" scale (35" scale for five-string)
Fingerboard | Maple, 21 frets
Pickups | EMG Split Single-coil, EMG Single-coil
Controls | 1 x master volume, 1 x pickup blend, 3-band active EQ
Weight | 5.8kg/12.8lbs, 6kg/13.2lbs
Case/gig bag included | No
Left-hand option available | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Tones, playability, build quality
Minus | Nothing comes to mind
Overall | Proof that Jackson can do non-metal basses too

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

STONEFIELD

Stonefield F-Series Classic

Like the look and sound of Stonefield basses, but can't afford one? Your prayers have been answered, says Brooks

Stonefield Musical Instrument Company
www.stonefieldmusic.com

£900

We've covered Stonefield's basses since day one, and for many players, these high-performance instruments' cost has always been a stumbling block. The company founder Tomm Stanley has responded by creating this new F-Series to cater for those on a regular budget. The fundamentals of the Stonefield design are obviously in place – so let's see how the new iteration stands up against its costlier siblings.

Build Quality

The familiar Stonefield body style has been retained – and instantly, the smooth, rounded body edges of the alder and maple body appear very welcoming. Cedar and walnut variants are also available, and the whole instrument feels characteristically organic, just as previous Stonefield basses did. Flipping the bass over, a cutaway channel down the centre of the body removes some excess weight and facilitates a reduced neck heel to improve comfort for the player. The whole instrument sports a satin finish which completes the 'natural' feel and benefits the three-piece maple neck. With an angled headstock and through-body stringing, the strings are tightly tensioned but if anything, this should give the notes greater definition.

The D-shaped neck profile gives the player a substantially rounded chunk of wood to work with, while the four-bolt neck joint is tight with no visible gaps. This Classic model sports a 45mm nut width (42mm on the Slimline model) so for those bassists who prefer the bulk of a Precision-style neck, this will definitely appeal to you.

The volume/volume/tone control layout is familiar, and it's a nice touch that the controls are inlaid into the body timber rather than sitting on top of the body. The Stonefield logo has been engraved into the body timber front and back, while the jack socket protrudes at an angle out of the lower body bout. The machine heads are sturdily fitted and turn smoothly, with the actual tuners made from ebony, as is the floating bridge... That's a lot of timber!

Sounds and Playability

This bass has a very clear, woody voice that combines warmth with a clear, resonant clarity. Thankfully, there is no harshness or clanky midrange, allowing the notes to ring and sustain without sounding overly aggressive. Some may find this a bit too refined for their taste, so if you want to add some aggression to the tone, employing a pick will get you into that territory.

Soloing each pickup produces the exact tones that you would expect of them, considering their location on the bass. The OEM humbuckers deliver a lively response but there's always a focused bottom end that never seems to muddy up the signal, which happens with some passive basses. Bringing the tone control into play gives some tonal colour and variation, and although the hardness of the ebony fingerboard gives the notes a lively attack, the tonal response is useable. One thing the player doesn't have to worry about is a harsh tone that they have to fight against – always a relief.

This F-Series bass shares the playability of its more expensive siblings, so don't assume that it has been a victim of any financial cutbacks: its playability and overall comfort are right up there. The fingerboard has rolled edges while the 19mm string spacing (16mm can also be ordered) and the low action work very well together.

Even without front or rear contouring, the bass is a joy to wear and play. The extended upper horn works beneficially for the instrument's overall balance, although there is minor headstock bias, and the lower cutaway gives the player spacious access to the upper neck area.

Conclusion

At £900, there is much to applaud here, considering the price points of the brand's more expensive models. Stanley has listened to the opinions of players far and wide and come up with the goods. At this price, the F-Series should strike a chord with many players looking for something a little different – and passive bass lovers will no doubt be happy to get one at a pocket-friendlier price.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £900 (£980 with walnut top)
Made In | India
Colour | Natural, satin finish
Body | Alder core with 10mm-thick North American maple top
Neck | Maple (three-piece laminate), 34" scale, satin finish
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, four-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 45mm
Fingerboard | Ebony
Frets | 24
Pickups | Passive OEM humbucking pickups x 2
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, volume, tone
Hardware | Floating ebony bridge, OEM-geared machine heads with ebony tuners
Weight | 3.8 kg / 8.37 lbs
Case/gig bag included | Custom gigbag is available for £100
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Great passive tones; playable; pocket-friendly
Minus | None
Overall | A break from the norm for many players – is that a bad thing?

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

HARTKE

LX8500

The new big box from the esteemed amp-makers Hartke arrives on Stuart Clayton's desk. Cover your ears, he advises

Hal Leonard Europe
www.halleonardeurope.com

€599

With an artist roster that boasts heavyweights such as Victor Wooten, Nate Watts, David Ellefson, James Genus and Billy Sheehan, Hartke remain one of the key players in the world of bass ampli cation. After venturing into the lightweight amp market just a few years back, the company are now adding to their line-up with the release of the new LX series. These are Class-D amplifiers with Class A tube preamp, available in both 500 and 800-watt continuous power configurations. We were sent the LX8500 to put through its paces.

The LX8500 has a sleek, modern look comprised of a robust, curved aluminium chassis with a conveniently recessed carrying handle. It's bigger than I was expecting, and certainly won't t into the front pocket of a gig bag, although at just 8.5lbs, it's certainly no hardship to carry. The controls feel sturdy in use and are circled by illuminated dots. The knob pointer line also illuminates, to make its position noticeable.

The front panel itself is uncluttered and simple to navigate. From left to right the input is followed by Drive, Mute, Compressor and Gain controls. The EQ stage has four controls: Bass, Shape, Frequency and Treble, with an additional Brite switch before the EQ which activates a pre-set EQ curve that greatly emphasises the high frequencies. In use, the basic tone is thick and satisfying with plenty of low-end oomph. The Drive control offers overdriven tones that range from subtle to brain-melting: this is useful both for adding subtle grit to some recording that I did with the amp, as well as rocking out with a much dirtier tone than I typically use. The driven tone has a pleasing warmth to it thanks to the 12AX7 tube-powered preamp, making it a welcome addition to the amp. The compressor functions as expected, with the illuminated dots changing to yellow to indicate the point at which it kicks in. A similar function is present with the Gain control, with a multi-point clip indicator LED showing red when the signal is overloaded.

The EQ stage on the LX8500 is a little unusual: this is a tone stack EQ which operates in a different way to traditional boost/cut controls. With no 'flat' setting, when the controls are set to the 12 o'clock position the response is set to a pre-set EQ curve that has been tailored to the bass guitar. There's a degree of interactivity between the controls as well, with the Bass control having an effect on the Shape control, which in turn has an effect on the Treble control. The Frequency control shifts the operating point

for all three EQ knobs, and as the Shape control is rotated clockwise, the depth of the notch increases; counter-clockwise, it increases the notch depth.

This is a versatile EQ, but it's one that requires experimentation with each individual instrument in order to tweak the tone to the user's satisfaction. Switching in the Brite function adds a significant high frequency bump to the basic tone, a feature that would work well for slap fills or for solo playing. The rest of the front panel is occupied by a master volume control, aux input and a headphone output socket. When using headphones, the speaker is disconnected, making the amp useful for home practising as well as live work. The rear of the amp features the usual connectivity: tuner out, Effects send and return, DI with pre/post switch and two TRS footswitch inputs which allow for the Drive, Effects Loop, Frequency and Brite parameters to be operated via footswitch. This latter function is useful as it means that a basic tone can be established, with the option of then kicking in a brightness boost via a footswitch for important fills.

Although I only used the LX8500 at home and for some recording, it's clear that this amplifier was built to handle much more. Outputting 800 watts of continuous power, this amplifier is well-suited to... Well, most bass players really. It's great for home practising and recording, and perfect for the majority of gigging scenarios. The overall tone is rich and warm and there's enough flexibility on offer to cater for most needs. At this price point you're getting a lot of power for your money – and for that reason alone, the LX8500 is worthy of your consideration. Power aside, there is much to like here: a versatile EQ, added compressor and drive functionality, all housed in a versatile and portable package. Hartke could be onto a real winner here.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | €599
Made In | China
Power | 800 watts @ 4 ohms, 525 watts @ 8 ohms
Preamp Tube | 12AX7WA, Class A, Low Noise High-Mu Twin Triode
Features | Drive, Compressor, Brite, Tone Stack EQ, 4 x footswitched functions
Dimensions | 14"/35.5cm (L) x 12"/30cm (W) x 3"/7.3cm (H)
Connections | 1/4" input jack, Aux In, headphone Output, Tuner Out, FX Loop Send and Return, pre and post DI, 2 x footswitch jacks, 1x Speakon plus ¼" (6.35mm) jack, DI with pre/post switch, Ground/Lift switch
Weight | 3.85kg (8.5lb)

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Nice feature set, very powerful
Minus | None
Overall | A versatile amp that should appeal to a wide range of players

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

AGUILAR
DB925 Bass Preamp

A new tone-shaping pedal from Aguilar in a small, but perfectly formed, package. Mike Brooks assesses its potential applications

Barnes & Mullins
www.bandm.co.uk

£195

The recent range of Silver Anniversary pedals, celebrating Aguilar's 25th anniversary, includes the DB925, an all-FET broadband preamp pedal allowing tonal sculpting of your bass tone. Housed in a micro pedal format, the limited footprint on your pedalboard is a positive aspect while the potential improvement to your regular bass tone is significant.

At first glance, the casing and sturdy build quality are what we've come to expect from Aguilar – and although the two controls are small and vertical, the potential for damage is limited. Offering 18dB of broadband boost from the bass (40Hz) and treble (4kHz) controls, the frequencies around these two points are also boosted, which sweetens the overall tonal response. This means that increasing or decreasing the bass control will also affect the low mids, while operating the treble control will affect the upper-mid frequencies.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £195
Made In | USA
Features | Broadband Bass (+18dB @ 40Hz), broadband Treble (+18dB @ 4kHz), ¼" in, ¼" out
Dimensions | 95mm (3.74") x 42.5mm (1.67") x 50mm (1.96")
Power | 9 volt DC power supply

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Excellent tone-shaping
Minus | Pricey compared to similar pedals
Overall | An impressive new release from Aguilar

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

In operation, the unit's sonic performance is impressive, adding more presence and power to the bottom end, tightening up the mids with detail and definition and – when pushed – offering a glassy, sparkly top end even when using strings that have long since been played in. The improved tonal depth propels passive instrument performance, while active instruments may only need a slight tweak here and there as they already have an active EQ on board. The pedal is still usable in the latter case, as it gives the player the opportunity to create a different tone which can be switched in or out as and when required.

Thankfully, all of the tonal possibilities are musical, and neither control sounds harsh, extreme or unusable when pushed to its respective limits. As a result, I can see many players gravitating towards this pedal for the tonal possibilities it has to offer.

This pedal performs a particular function, of course. If you prefer to control your mid-frequencies with a separate control, consider Aguilar's ever-popular Tone Hammer DI pedal.

The asking price is not insignificant, and some players may question this unit's flexibility compared to other preamp pedals on the market. Still, as with all the best preamps, when I turned the DB925 off and returned to my non-effected tone, I found myself wondering why I'd put up with my bass sounding like that for so long – and that counts for a lot.

Cortex
Bass
WWW.CORTEXBASS.COM

STAR BASS

Each month we celebrate the great — and rather less great! — work of an acclaimed bass player. This month: Paul Turner, Jamiroquai

Words: Joel McIver Image: Getty

British bassist Paul Turner is a musician steeped in funk and soul influences, having been a member of Jamiroquai since 2005. His astounding bass playing, first heard in public when he played alongside Edwin Starr and Ruby Turner in his early career, is at front and centre with the Jay Kay-led band on 2010's *Rock Dust Light Star* and *Automaton* from 2017, delivered by a range of gear from Aguilar and Stenback. He also guests regularly with veteran acts such as Sister Sledge and has formed side projects including Shuffler, Dark Sinatras, Trioniq and Brother Strut, and if that isn't enough, he's played on a very long list of sessions, which makes it all the more tricky to choose five albums for this feature...

MUST-HAVE ALBUM

Jamiroquai – Automaton (2017)

This album is funky, of course, just as you'd expect it to be, but there's a definite contemporary edge to Jamiroquai's most recent studio outing. It's also the one that Turner claims to be most proud of. "In bass terms, it has a varied palette of both playing styles and tones, and it was great to be a part of all of that," he tells us. "There's dark, flatwound playing on my 1963 Precision, and I also used a fretless five-string Music Man on the title track. You'll hear my 1966 Jazz and my Stenback five-string on there as well." Turner's parts vary from uplifting lines on songs such as 'Summer Girl', which has an acid jazz feel, to songs like 'Vitamin' which are more old-school. "Those songs are still acid jazz, but they're getting closer to the jazz side of that sound," he says. "The album sounded and felt new, which was important to us because we don't like to feel that we're doing the same album over again. Jay always wants to move forward, both sonically and stylistically, and I think on *Automaton* we hit both of those sweet spots. I played all the tracks through my Jule Monique preamp."

WORTHY CONTENDER

Trioniq – Deux (2020)

Trioniq is Turner, Rob Harris from Jamiroquai and Iwan Van Hetten, who is the trumpet and keyboard player in a band called the Brooklyn Funk Essentials. As Turner explains of this amped-up side project, "We write the material and invite drummers and vocalists when required, and we record live with everybody in the same room. It's a writing project just as much as it's about playing, and it's all about the music we fell in love with when we were kids – 70s-style funk and soul." Asked about gear, he reveals a mixture of modern and vintage sources. "I used a Stenback for everything on this album apart from one song, 'Peanut Cookies', where I played a '73 Mustang. That bass is great with a pick – really responsive. There's another song called 'Difficult' with a slap feature in it, but I think all the songs are interesting, bass-wise."

COOL GROOVES

Brother Strut – Shake Your Money (2018)

People have described Brother Strut as a British Vulfpeck – and as you'd expect, it's an old-school soul and funk band. Sure, this band isn't reinventing the wheel or anything, but it's fun and definitely groovy. "This was all tracked with a Stenback apart from the title track, which was my '66 Fender Jazz," says Turner. "I recorded it for the previous album (*What We Got Together*, 2016), when I didn't have my Stenback." The other members of Brother Strut, Frank Tontoh and Stevie Jones, mesh with Turner's playing in the patented funk-collective style, he adds. "I enjoy being in this band, because there's lots of awareness of space from all of us, as well as some tasty fills in the grooves. The bass is a little more driven than I would ordinarily go for – I really pushed the Monique preamp this time, with the saturation on full."

WILD CARD

Dark Sinatras – Happy Families (2014)

It's been a funk-heavy selection of albums so far, as you'd expect from the bass player with the biggest funk band on the planet, but Turner's artistic direction also encompasses more aggressive stuff. The Dark Sinatras take their cue from intelligent metal bands such as Tool, and of course that means a very different approach to bass from Turner. "The tones are overdriven, the picking is very aggressive and the music is pretty dark, like the name, which is why this is my Wild Card choice," he says. The recording gear includes some suitably heavyweight basses, amps and effects, too. "I used my 1966 Jazz bass and a Fodera NYC five, both detuned a step. I tracked a lot through an Ampeg SVT, with some Darkglass pedals, a Woolly Mammoth and an Aguilar Agro distortion. I love that pedal because it keeps the low end really well." Check out the cover art if you need an idea of what the music sounds like.

AVOID AT ALL COSTS

Gary Barlow – Twelve Months, Eleven Days (1999)

Remember when the ex-Take That warbler Gary Barlow took his first crack at a solo career? The results weren't exactly earth-shattering, although nowadays he's doing rather better. Barlow's early albums are largely forgettable even by his fans, although Turner's bass playing does the job admirably. As the bassist recalls two decades later, "I mostly used a Sei Jazz five-string, which was the first five that [Sei luthier] Martin Peterson ever built. I had to persuade him to build it, in fact, and I'm glad I did, because I used that bass for a long time." There's a cool bass part on the song 'Wondering', so it's not all bad. "I felt good about that track after I'd recorded it. This may be a middle-of-the-road pop album, but you've still got to do your job as creatively as possible," says Turner. Barlow recently resurrected that very song for his current band – proof that quality endures.

BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in... **Joel McIver, editor**

Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here!
Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across nearly two decades of touring, and a huge catalogue of solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for over two decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists – but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue?
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners 50

Now you're rolling with theory and techniques, it's time to hit the next level
Philip Mann studied at the London College of Music, securing bachelor's and master's degrees in performance before receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. Endorsed by Overwater and Vanderkley, he's now a busy international freelancing electric and double bassist. His performance and session credits include work with double Grammy Award-winning guitarist Albert Lee, five-time Grammy Award nominee Hunter Hayes, Deep Purple's Steve Morse, Billy Bragg and country artist Peter Donegan. He has featured as a solo demonstration artist at the London Bass Guitar Show every year since 2012 and is currently a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School while also lecturing for Scott's Bass Lessons.

PHIL MANN

Intermediate 54

Take the bass world by storm with the ultimate tuition section
Stuart Clayton has been a professional musician, writer and transcriber since 2002 and has worked in function bands, cruise ship gigs, theatre shows and more. He spent four years recording and touring the world with legendary Emerson, Lake & Palmer drummer Carl Palmer and has worked for *BGM* since its first issue. Since 2007 Stuart has worked as the Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Bristol, where he continues to teach all levels of the degree course. In addition, he has also worked as the Bass Guitar Technical Specialist for the Rockschool exam board. Stuart now runs Bassline Publishing, which publishes transcription books for bassists such as Mark King, Marcus Miller, Stuart Hamm, Bernard Edwards, Stuart Zender and John Entwistle, as well as an acclaimed range of tuition books.

STUART CLAYTON

Advanced 60

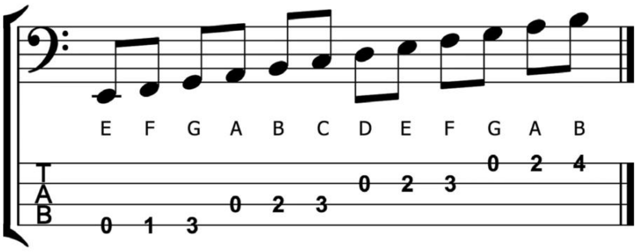
BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

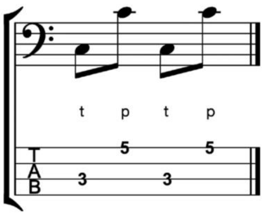
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.

Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

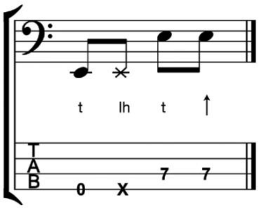


PLAYING TECHNIQUES



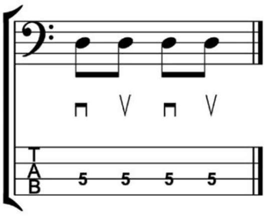
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



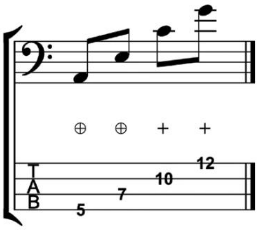
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

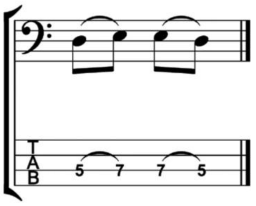
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

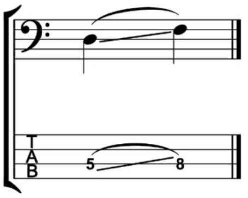
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are just '+'. Particular fingers may be shown with numbers.

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



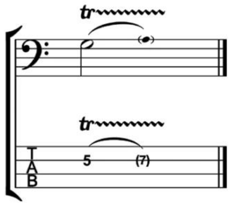
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



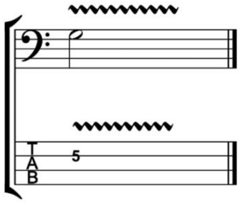
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note



TRILLS

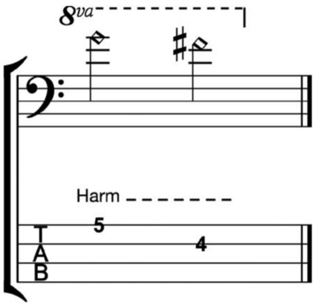
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs



VIBRATO

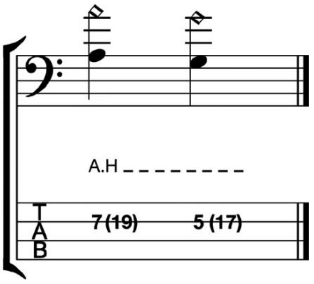
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

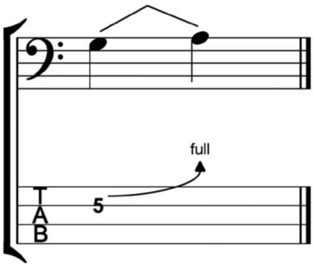
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

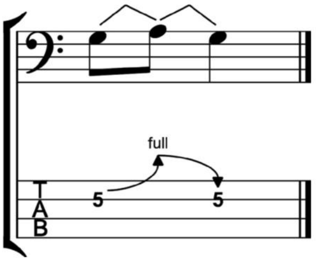
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and touching the edge of the picking hand's thumb to the note in brackets

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

STEVE LAWSON

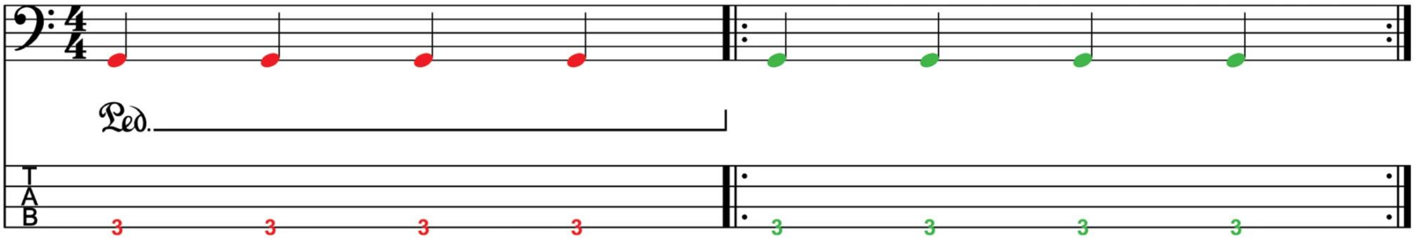
Beginners' Tutorial

Step away from theory for a minute, says beginners' guru Steve Lawson. This month, we're learning how to learn… with a looper

One piece of kit that you'll have seen mentioned here a few times, and which has been a constant presence in my music making and learning for almost three decades, is the looper. Loop pedals have come a very long way since I first started experimenting with the two seconds (!) of loop time in my ART Nightbass back in the early 90s. I've been performing live with a looper since just after those first experiments, and in that time, I've discovered so many ways that a looper can help me learn and practise. Used wisely, a loop pedal can help make you a much better musician, so let's start exploring a few of the ways we can employ it in our solo practice – something that we're all too familiar with right now! We're going to break down the aspects that a looper can help with into three main categories: timing, harmony and listening. Let's start with timing.

The first thing we need to realise about practising with a looper is that creating the loop has its own rhythmic impact on our music. This is a feature, not a bug, that we've inherited from turntablism. The way that a DJ spins a breakbeat back to the 'launch' point and lets it go again is a significant part of their groove, and while we have less specific control than that over a loop, just getting control over the process of starting to record and then creating our first loop has implications for our relationship with time. The first is just hitting the button in time with our foot:

Example 1



Whoa! What's with the coloured note heads? Today, we're also going to get into the idea that notation is about communicating music. Conventions matter, and they're there to make communication easier, but actually, we can do whatever we need to do with them to get our point across. So for looping, I use coloured note heads to indicate whether something is being recorded, playing back in the looper, or being played over the loop without being recorded:

- Red means it's currently being recorded
- Green means it's playing back in the looper
- Black means you're playing over the top of the loop

This gives us a way to notate all of it without getting confused about what we need to play at any time. I also use the pedal notation from the piano to indicate the start and stop points for the looper, so we can see where the loop starts and where it has to end (or indeed, where we go into overdub and where we come out). So, the start of the pedal notation (ped.) is where you hit 'record' or overdub, and the end of the line is the beat where you hit 'loop' or 'end record'.

The language that each loop device uses to describe what's going on varies greatly – and often reflects what the manufacturer thinks you're actually doing with it – so hopefully it's clear that in almost every loop device, we have two possible meanings for the beginning and ending loop points. For the very first loop, we define the length of the loop by starting recording and then switching from recording to playback of that first loop. After that, the same button (usually) becomes the overdub button, and will toggle us in and out of record mode over the first loop.

In Example 1, we're just playing four low Gs and trying to loop them so it sounds like we're playing constant quarter notes. In doing this we'll learn pretty fast whether or not our particular loop pedal has any latency – that is, any delay between us pushing the button and something actually happening. For some pedals there are a few milliseconds of latency, so we'll either need

to compensate for that, or hear it as part of our own unique groove in a looping situation, like the DJs mentioned earlier.

There's another aspect to the rhythmic learning here, and that's hearing your own playing immediately after you've played it. Listening to recordings of ourselves is always interesting, but it normally happens after we've been playing, perhaps as a rehearsal recording, or watching a video of a gig. Here, the listening is happening as part of our playing time – we're immediately responding to what has just happened.

If our timing is off, we'll hear it straight away. It can be a little alarming to become suddenly aware of the inconsistencies in our own playing that we 'iron out' in our own minds while we're actually playing. We generally hear ourselves as a mixture of what we're actually doing and what we think we're doing. The looper removes the option to massage the truth, and presents the sound of what we're playing to us in stark reality.

We may suddenly hear the way that we accent particular notes when we're playing – maybe this alternates between our picking fingers. We may find that our timing is more uneven than we'd imagined. And in regards to the looper, we may find that the mild panic about where we need to end the loop means we mess up our timing towards the end of the loop. That tiny spike in adrenaline when you think 'Argh! I need to get this in time or it's ruined!' can play havoc with your internal clock.

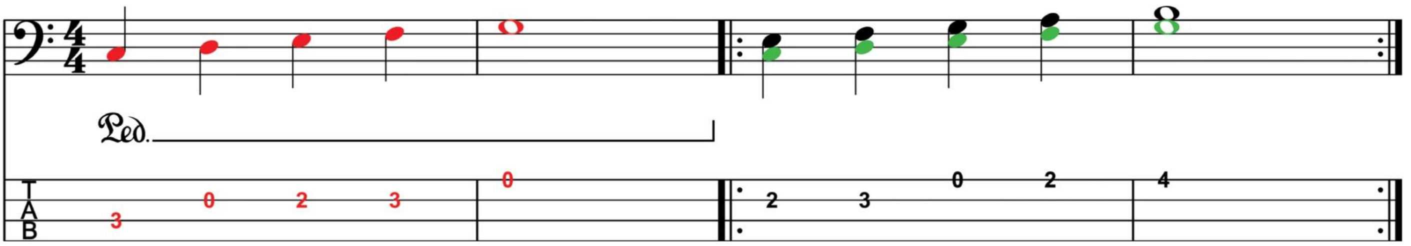
Our practice here is about two things, then. Firstly, the ability to hit the pedal in time; secondly, to develop a level of familiarity with the process so that it's no longer a source of anxiety to have to hit the end of our first loop in time. This has implications for all kinds of other aspects of our playing. Exactly the same loss of groove can happen if we're panicking about backing vocals, about turning on a pedal that we only use during the chorus, or even the approach to a particularly troublesome fill. Those little anxiety spikes draw our attention away from holding the groove – and cause us to mentally and physically tense up.

Learning to loop in time is great physical and mental training for the compartmentalisation that allows you to stay calm while still giving due thought to whatever is coming up in the song. As an aside, if you want to see the absurd version of this at work, have a look at pretty much any video of me playing solo on YouTube. I'm constantly having to switch my attention between playing my actual bass and all the extra control stuff that's going on. Whether that's looping, turning pedals on, controlling things with my hands, grabbing a slide or an eBow... All those things draw my focus away from the actual playing, so I need to be able to split my attention to keep the bass sounding the way I want it to. Being as familiar as possible with the processes involved makes it way easier.

So, once we've worked on our simple line, you can do the same with any grooves you've been working on. Any repetitive song is good for this. Sixteenth-note lines will be less forgiving than eighth and quarter note lines, so work up to them over time. After that, we can apply our new-found awareness of time to a layering exercise.

Here, we're going to take our knowledge of scales and put it to the test. This five-note sequence from our C Major scale adds a note a third higher on top of every note we've just played. This can really help us develop an ear for harmonies, whether they show up in our bass playing, or when writing collectively with our band. Try this:

Example 2



From a timing point of view, holding that G for four beats may pose a bit of a challenge. Resist the urge to turn on your metronome for now, and focus on developing your internal clock. If your looper has the option to add drums or use stored loops, then that'll be useful for future practice, but for now, focus on your own sense of time.

Getting that second layer in time requires us to anticipate the first note after that long four-beat held note. It's a great litmus test for how well we can count and how well we can relax into the job. You've got no room to panic and tense up, or that first E on top of the C will be out of time. Remember our colour code – red is you recording the initial loop, green is it playing back, and black is you playing over it.

You can practise playing over the line as many times as you want, before hitting record and then hearing two layers of yourself. Then it's time to listen to it a few times to hear how well the two parts fit. Is the timing the same in both? Are the dynamics consistent so you can hear each note in both parts? There are a load of really interesting aesthetic questions you can ask of your own playing as a result of this exercise. If you're up to it, try it again and move the second layer up one octave, so you start the same phrase at the 14th fret on your D string. See how that changes your sense of what's going on.

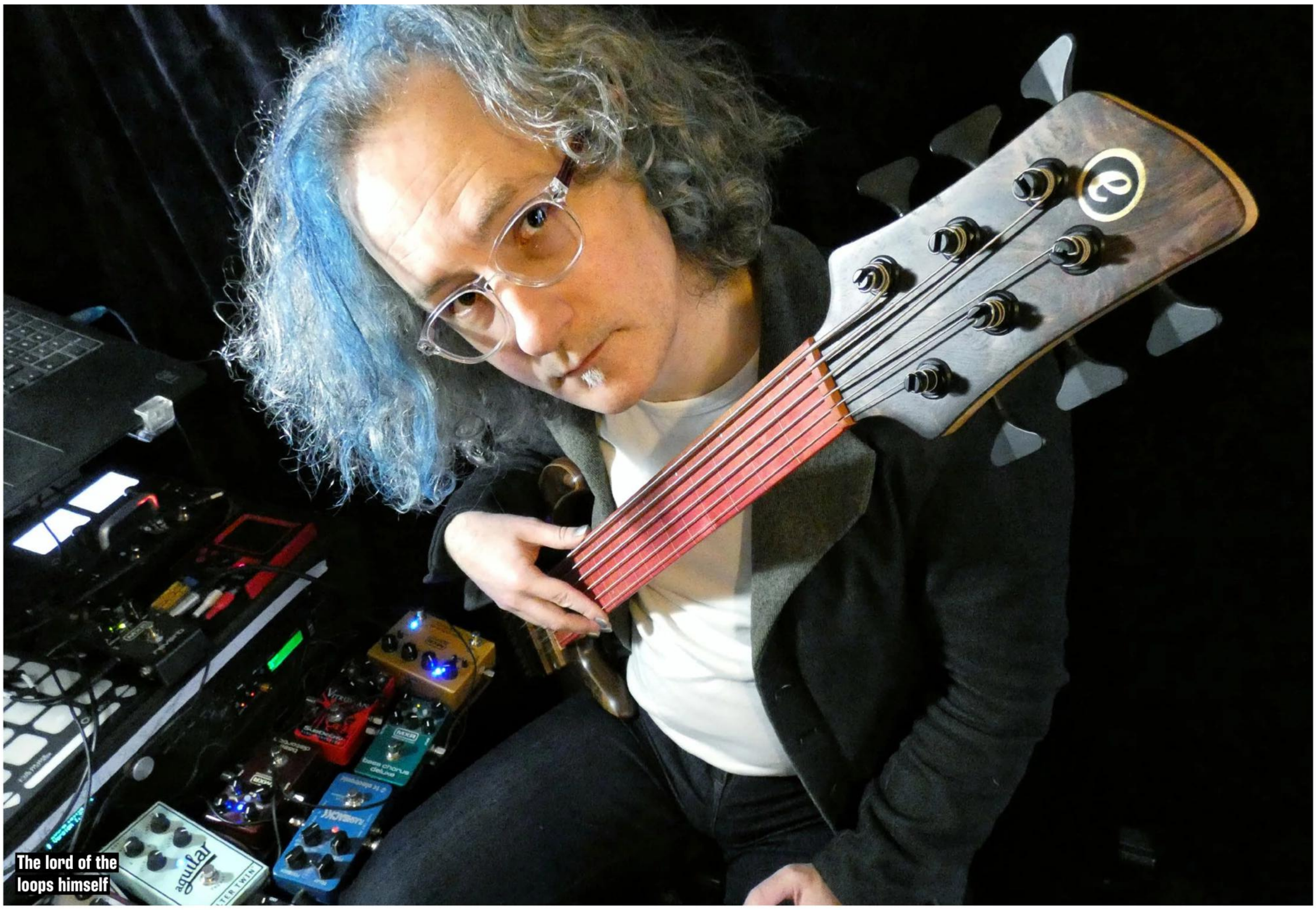
Part of the value of doing this without a click is back to our old focus on the most important question being 'Is it good?', not 'Is it right?' Playing it in time is about control, and we really do need to develop that – but alongside that we need to be applying our awareness of what we actually want the music to sound like. Even an exercise as simple as this can be a testing ground for things we can change to alter the way the music makes us feel.

> "RESIST THE URGE TO USE YOUR METRONOME – FOCUS ON DEVELOPING YOUR INTERNAL CLOCK"

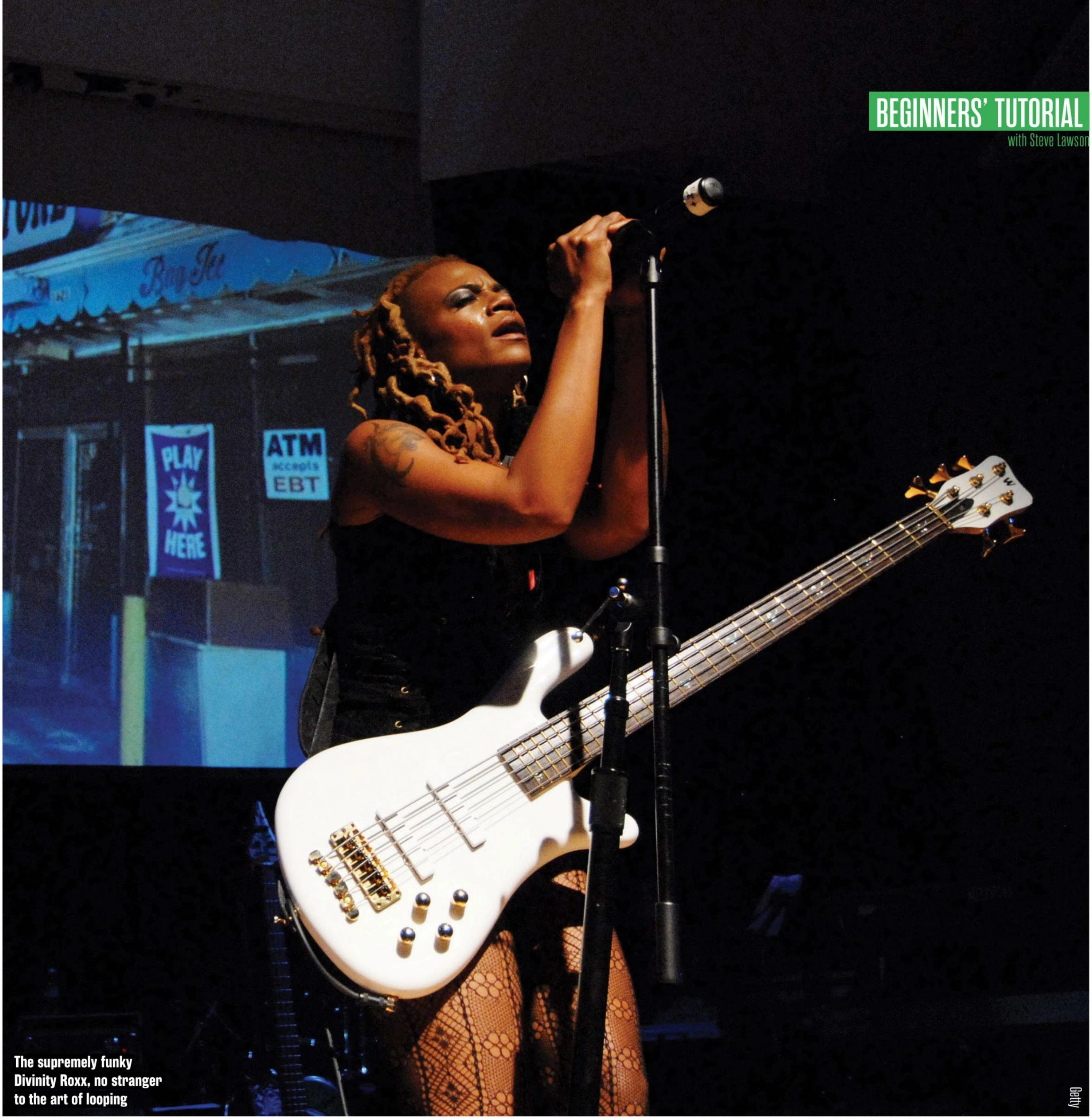
What happens if you drag the second layer behind the beat and play it more like a singer would? What does that teach us about melody? What happens if we flip the two bars round and play the four-note ascending scale pattern over the held G in the second bar, and then hold the B over the ascending scale that's already in the loop? One of the amazing things about loop-based music of any kind is the ability to play 'audio Tetris' with it and shuffle things around. Layering ideas makes it way easier to actually hear ideas slotting together, and to quickly try out more experimental ideas before we take them to our band to try out.

For our last layer here, we're going to add the fifth, but before we do, I want you to try and sing it. It doesn't really matter whether you can sing in tune or not – this isn't an audition for you to do backing vocals. It's about your ability to internalise and imagine what the music that you're about to play is going to sound like. Singing it is an expression of that, so try singing the next note up.

Play a C, followed by an E, then hear in your head what the G will sound like. Now sing the next five notes above that in the key of C. The looper makes it easy for us to check whether what we thought the line would sound like is accurate or not. Here's the third phrase. Again, it's okay to play it one octave higher if you can:



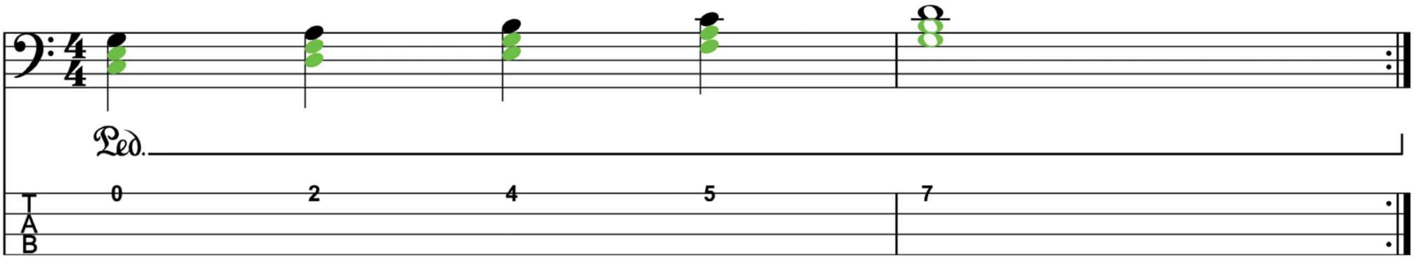
The lord of the loops himself



The supremely funky Divinity Roxx, no stranger to the art of looping

Getty

Example 3



Listening to yourself is important for a lot of reasons, but high up on that list is getting comfortable with what the audience hear. It's not just drunk people who hear themselves as better than they are!

The looper is an amazing partner in discovering what we really sound like. We get to test how good our inner metronome is, we get to put other aspects of our technique under the microscope and make fixes to them right there and then, and we get to hear our ideas fleshed out as we learn to harmonise and build more complex music out of multiple layers of bass.

None of this requires us to be advanced players. Focusing on doing simple things to a higher standard is a key part of developing the aesthetic awareness we so often reference here.

Our improvement isn't just about knowing more stuff and playing it faster: a looper allows us to drill deeper into what makes simple playing so effective. Until next month, have fun!

PHIL MANN

Intermediate Tutorial

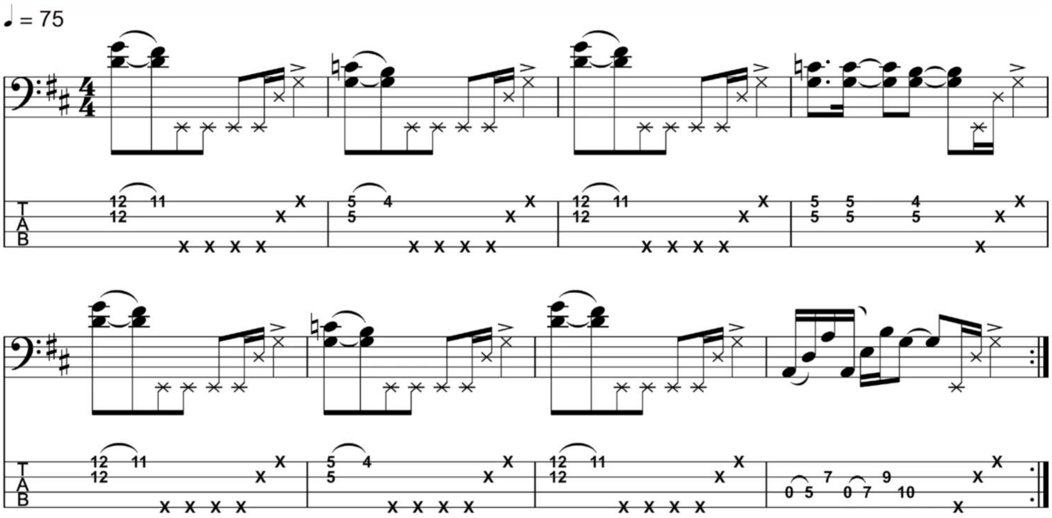
Subordinate substitutions, you say, Phil? Tell us more...

Welcome back! When we try to learn new vocabulary, it can be a little overwhelming. Take 7th vocabulary, for example – a sophisticated language that generates an endless array of permutations, ranging from the labels used in identification, to the theory necessary to perceive them.

What's more, 7th chords produce a far more refined sound than their three-note counterparts. So, rejoice then, for this month we will be dipping our toes in the waters of 7th vocabulary. We shall start by exploring one of the most revered chords of all: the Dominant.

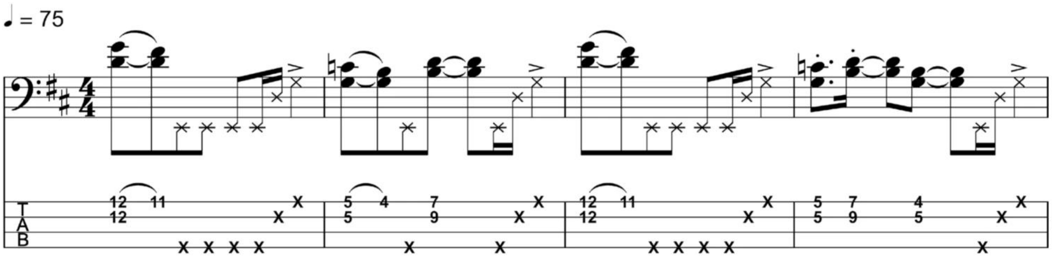
Example 1

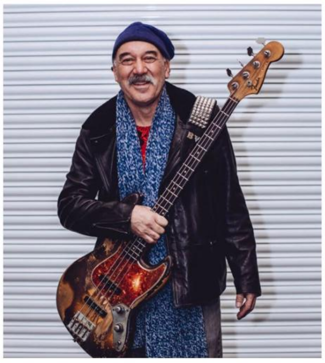
Our opening exercise is a straightforward groove based upon a I-IV chord progression in the key of D major. You'll notice that most of the measures open with a double stop, made from the root, major 3rd and perfect 4th. Use your fretting hand's middle and ring fingers to create the initial perfect 4th interval and produce a descending slur between your ring and index fingers. This ends the phrase on a major 3rd interval.



Example 2

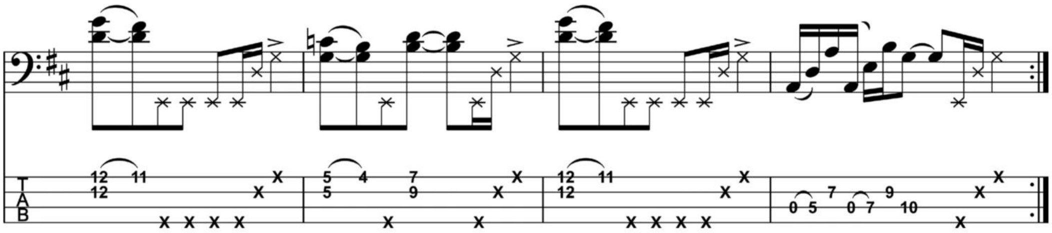
This percussive figure appears once more on beat three of the next exercise. If you say the word 'lemonade' to yourself, you'll hear the intended rhythm. Play the initial dead note of the phrase with your thumb and the 16th notes with your index and middle fingers. The more challenging elements of this passage come when you discover that each dead note is on an adjacent string. Away from these percussive landmarks, be mindful of two other specifics: the first is the





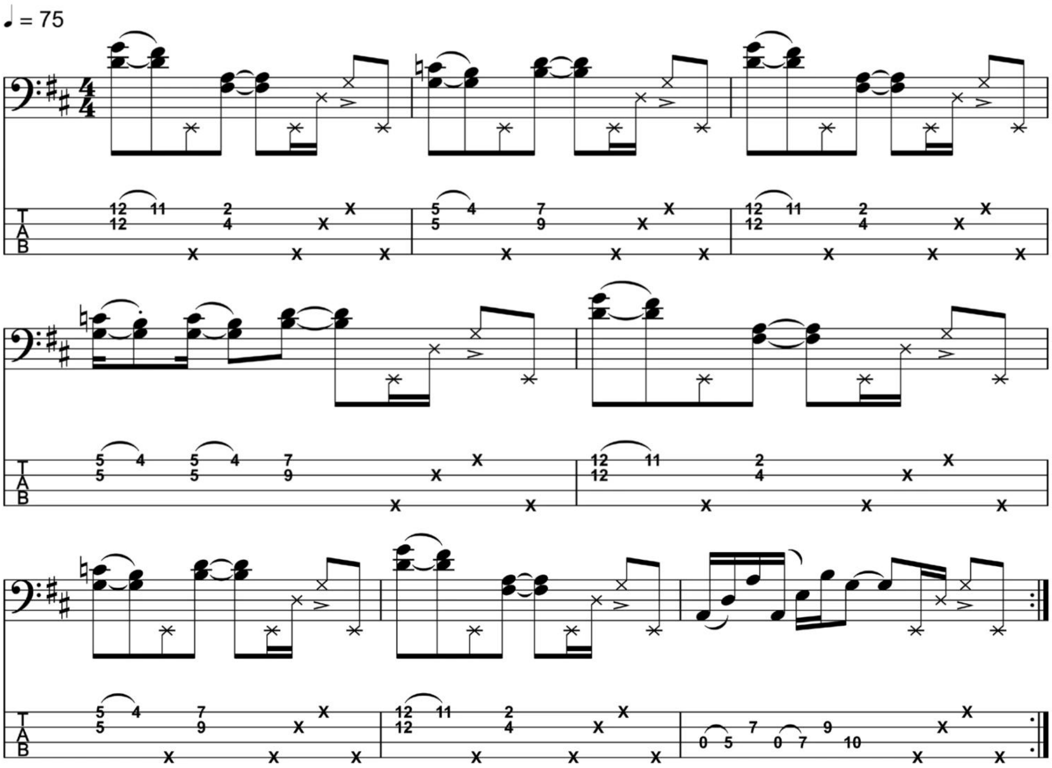
Bassists for whom advanced techniques go hand in hand, but whose deft lines any intermediate player should definitely attempt: Bobby Vega (left above), Divinity Roxx (left below) and Jeff Hughell

presence of first inversion, portrayed by a double stop in the second and fourth measures; the second is the inclusion of an open-hammer motif in the final bar.



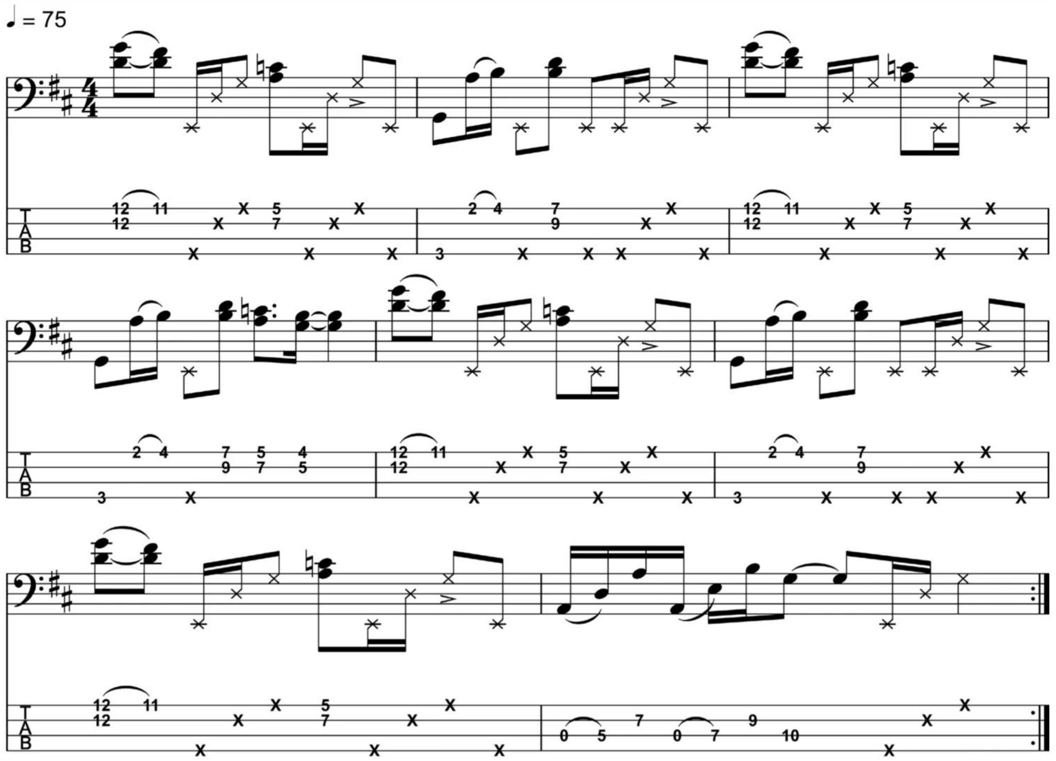
Example 3

Example 3 gives us enough breathing space to address the tricky final bar of each of our two previous studies. Here, you're required to play a steady steam of 16th notes, produced with an open-hammer technique. Pluck the first note, hammer the second and then pluck the third – and repeat as required. After this technical prerequisite, you may notice that a supplementary 8th note now appears on beat four, as well as a precarious rhythm at the beginning of the fourth bar.



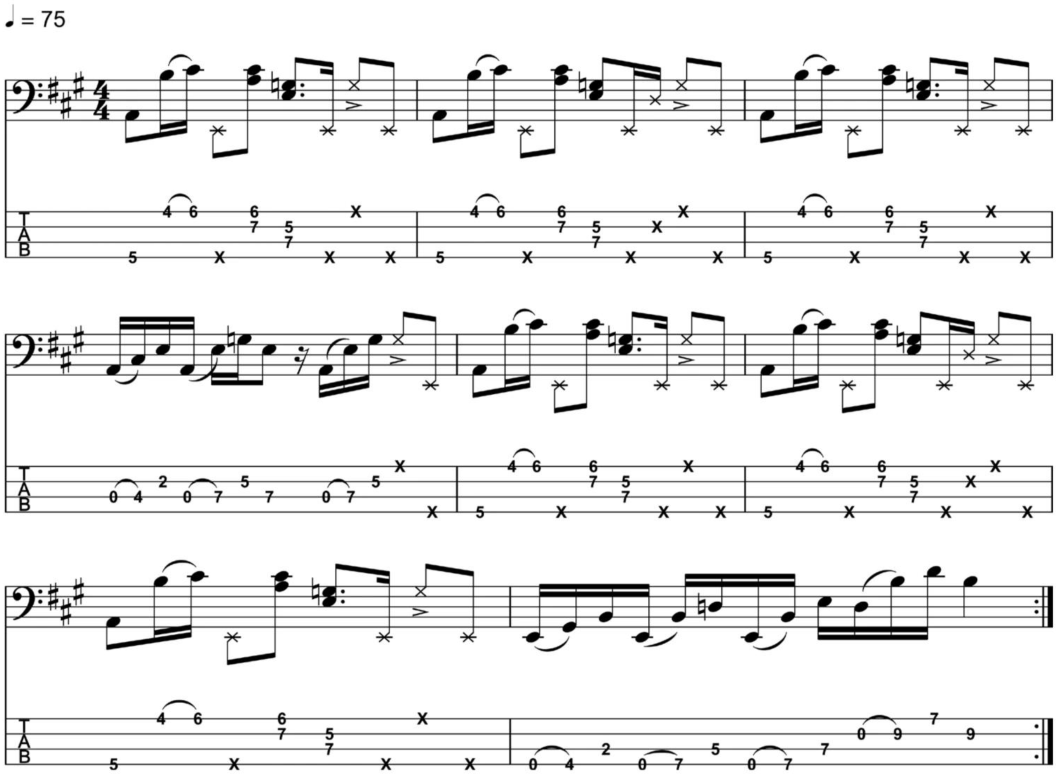
Example 4

Example 4 is a wolf in sheep's clothing, with an array of double stops that portray triadic first inversion and dominant harmony. Notice that beat two features some enhanced percussive phrasing. These additional dead notes on the second beat require you to further your dexterity, as jockeying between stopped and muted pitches can be challenging.



Example 5

Example 5 primarily comprises a single dominant chord that eventually transcends to the V7 to evoke a perfect cadence. For six bars you'll be required to pedal an ostinato groove consisting of dominant 7th vocabulary. Analysing the first measure, we see that an ascending slur precedes two pairs of double stops. These are an octave and major 10th interval and then a perfect 5th and b7th. You'll also notice that the open-hammer technique not only appears twice, but has also undergone a melodic facelift.



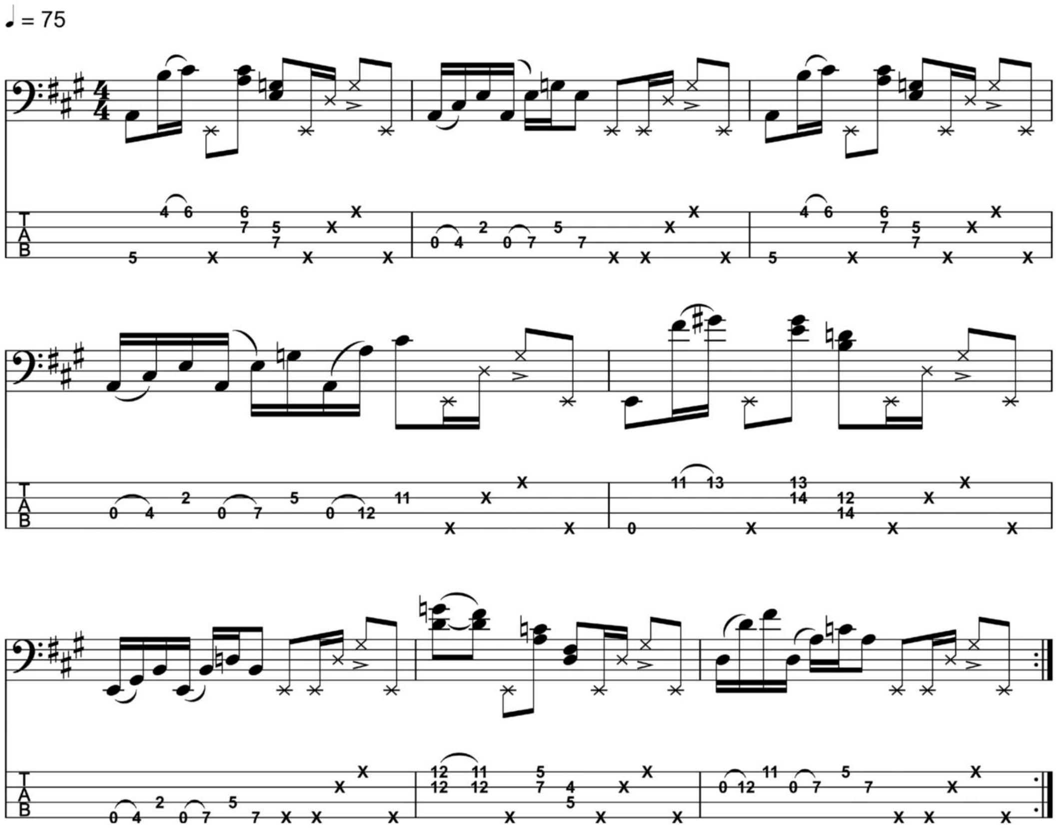
The immortal Jaco Pastorius, to whom we all owe a debt

Warners

Example 6

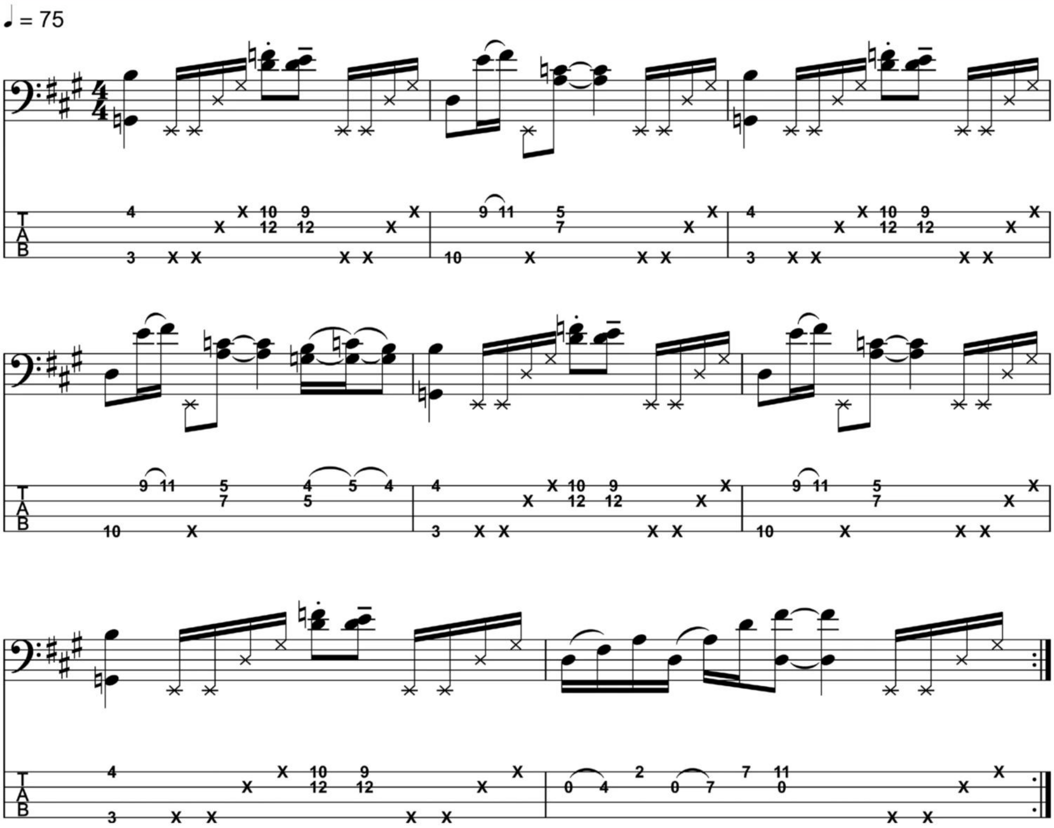
Continuing our studies in the key of A Major, Example 6 is an example of a lazy groove built upon a dominant I7-V7-IV7 chord progression. As you transcend the piece, you'll encounter an array of dominant chords, all with a consistent melodic theme. In each case the structure will be delivered over two bars.

During the first bar, you'll be required to play an ascending slur between the 9th and 10th intervals, followed by two double stops. The first of these pairs uses the root and 10th intervals, the second employs the perfect 5th and b7th. During the second bar of each phrase you'll play a steady stream of 16th notes, delivered in groupings of three. Be careful not to rush this phrasing, as it'll upset the subsequent percussive groove.



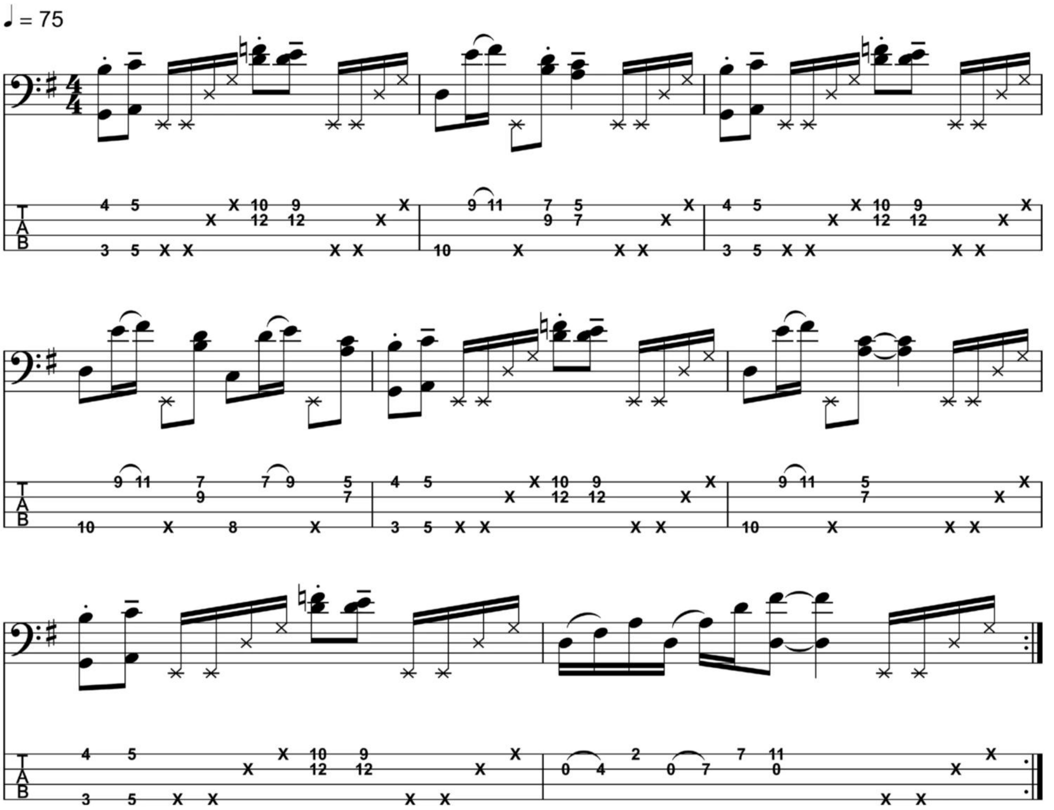
Example 7

This month's penultimate study continues our pursuit of dominant vocabulary, but with new elements. Initially, you'll spot the obvious key change from A to G Major, but on closer inspection you'll also realise that the percussive rudiments have evolved. In order to execute these passages you'll need to thumb an initial dead note before playing the stream of 16th notes with your index and middle fingers.



Example 8

This month's final exercise is a remodelled incarnation of its predecessor. Once again, double stops have been employed to stress various dominant textures within the piece. There's a lesson to be had here, which is that every seed sown has the potential to flourish into something far more extravagant. Keep well, I'll see you next month!



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STUART CLAYTON

Advanced Tutorial

Slap specialist Stuart Clayton talks us through the power behind the double stop

Welcome to the latest instalment in my new column, in which we'll be exploring some of the more advanced elements of the slap bass technique. Over the last few issues, we've explored ways in which we can incorporate the fretting hand into our playing – in each case, we've used this additional element to add an extra layer of rhythmic complexity to our lines. We're now going to turn our attention to a device which will allow us to better communicate harmony in our lines. That device is the double stop.

DOUBLE STOPS

A double stop is simply two notes – any two notes – that are played together. In most cases, using double stops helps us to better communicate the overall harmony of a line, just through our bass part. Double stops can be fourths, fifths, octaves, tenths or any other pair of notes, although as you'll discover, some are more popular than others, particularly when playing in the slap style.

Slap bassists have been using double stops from the very earliest days of the slap and pop technique. Stanley Clarke put them to good use on bass anthems such as 'School Days' and 'Lopsy Lu', Marcus Miller used them extensively on tracks such as 'Power' and 'Scoop' and the Red Hot Chili Peppers track 'Blood Sugar Sex Magik' features strummed power chords, which are another great example of how double stops can be used.

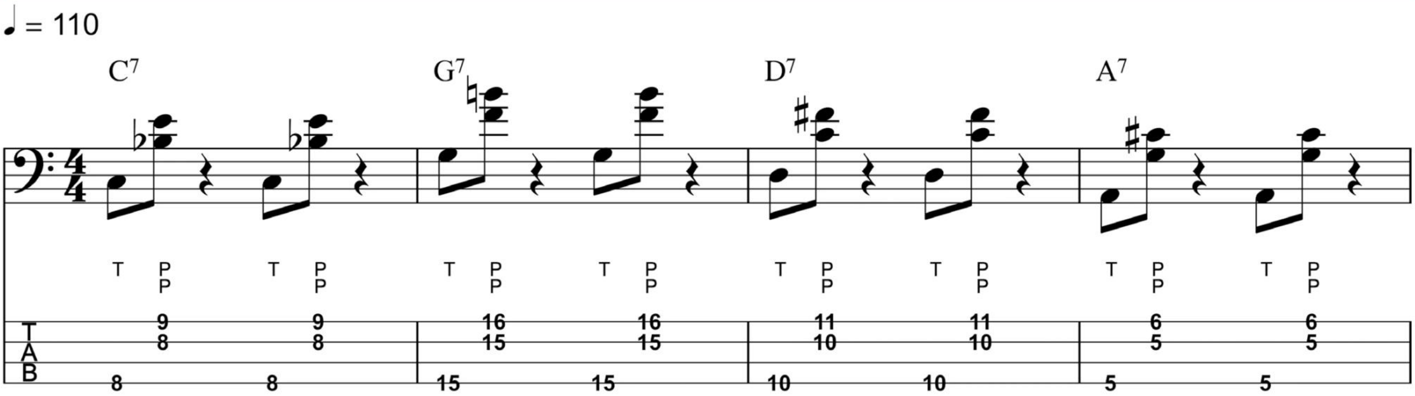
Double stops are most commonly played by popping two notes simultaneously with the first and second fingers. This is shown in the photograph.

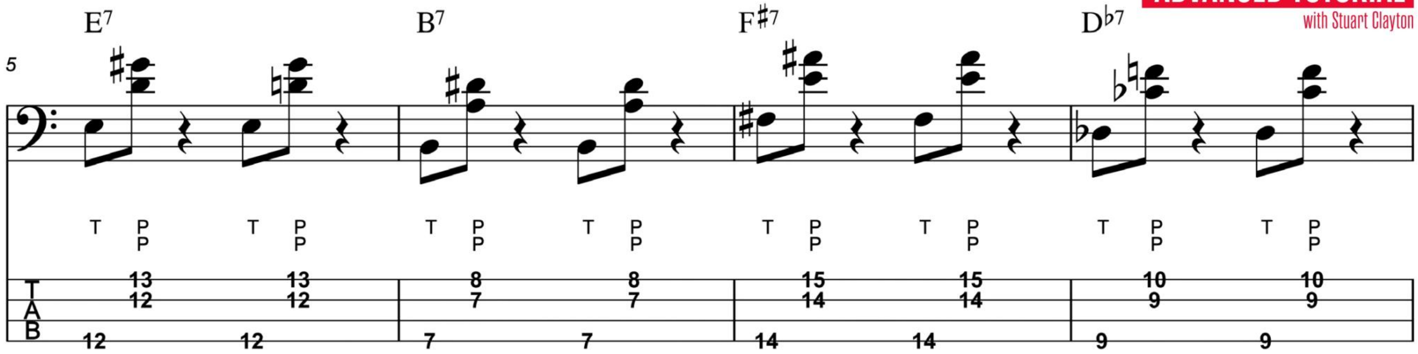
Whether you generally prefer to pop notes with your first or second finger, it is advisable to be able to use both, not only for playing double stops, but also for some of the techniques that will be covered over the course of the next few issues.

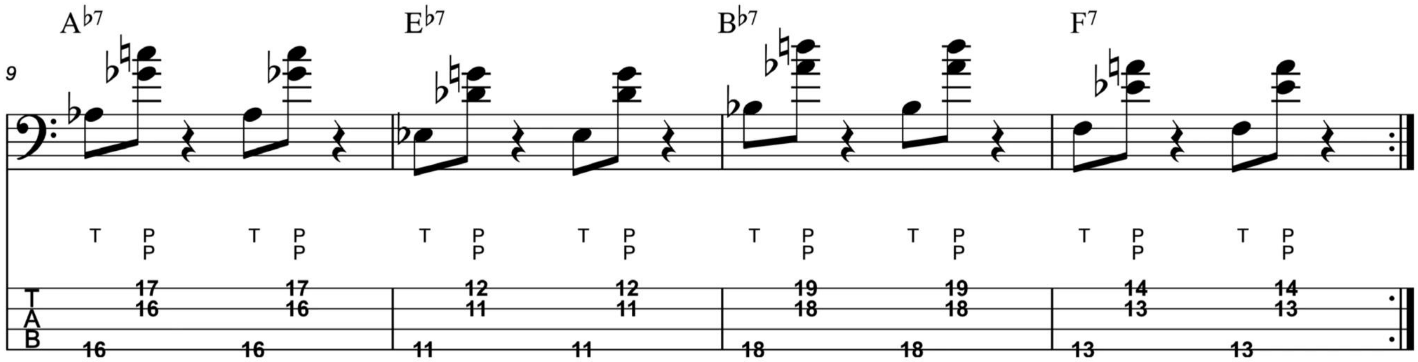
Although double stops are most often played this way, it should be noted that there are many other ways to play two notes at the same time. Tenths and strummed power chords, as mentioned earlier, are also examples of double stops.

Let's look at some exercises that will help us incorporate double stops into our playing.

Example 1



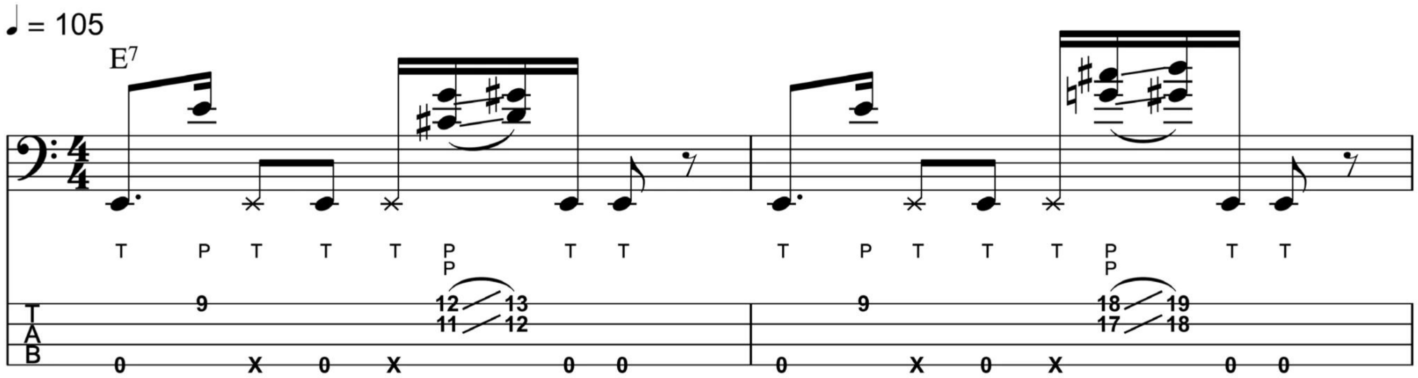


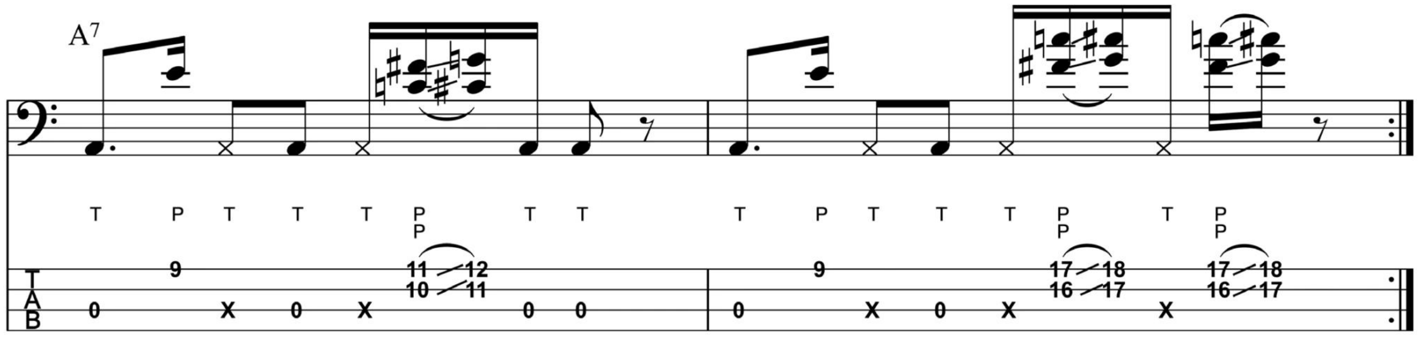


This exercise consists of a series of dominant seventh chords, following the circle of fifths. For each of these chords, you will slap the root with your thumb, then play the seventh and third – which in this case is actually a tenth – with your first and second fingers. You will hear that the dominant quality of each chord comes through very clearly when played like this.

This is because the most colourful notes from the chord – the third and seventh – have been used as the double stop. Since this type of double stop is so common in funk music, it is often referred to as the 'funk double stop'.

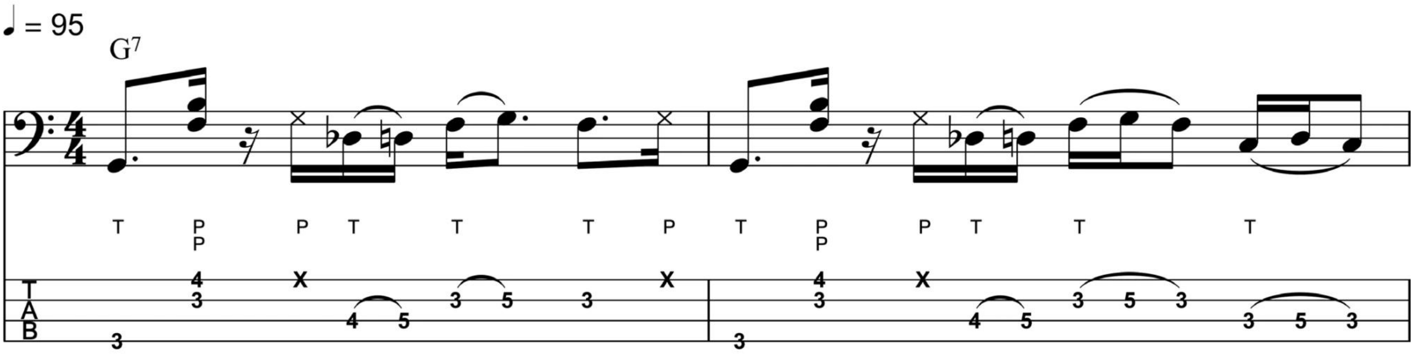
Example 2

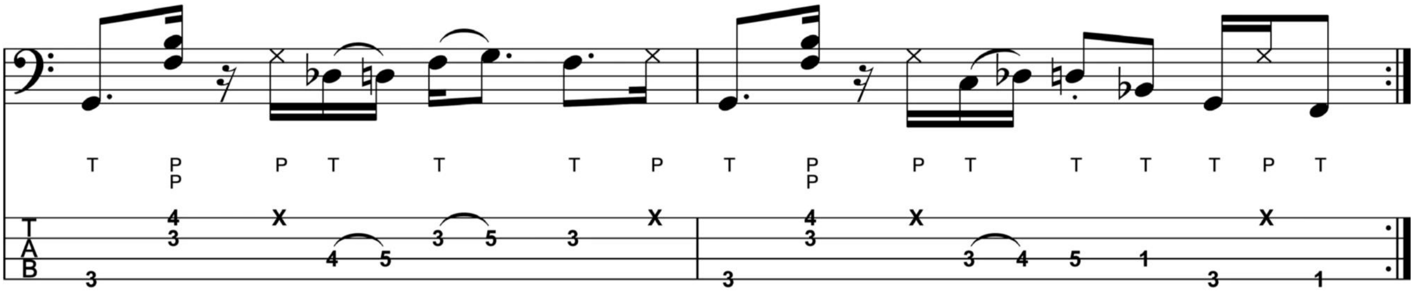




This is a bass-line that also utilises funk double stops. Note that the double stops in the second bar of each phrase are an inversion of the ones in the previous bar. Because the seventh and third of the chord are a diminished fifth apart, either one can go on top of the other. In the first bar, there is a D with a G♯ on top – ignoring the notes which slide into the chord – whereas in the second bar there is a G♯ with a D on top. You should make yourself comfortable with both inversions in all keys, since these double stops in particular work well in many styles.

Example 3

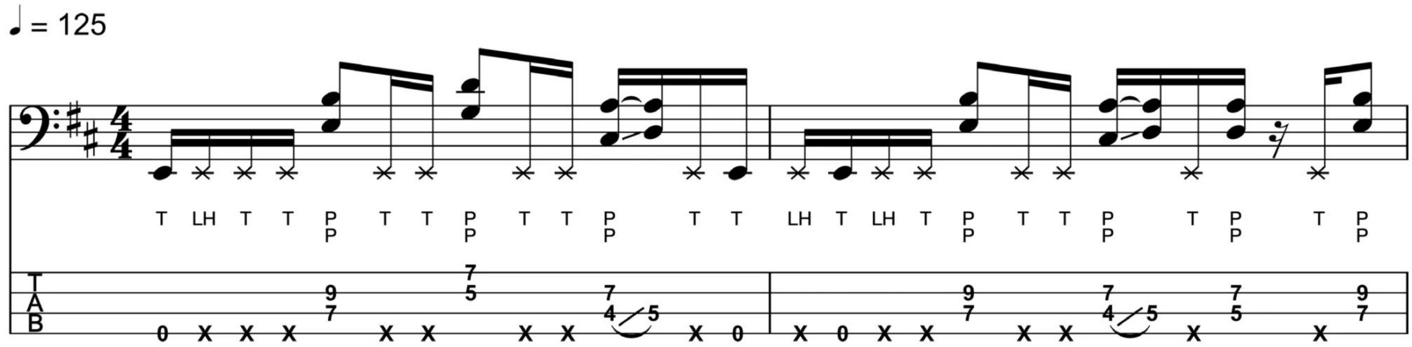


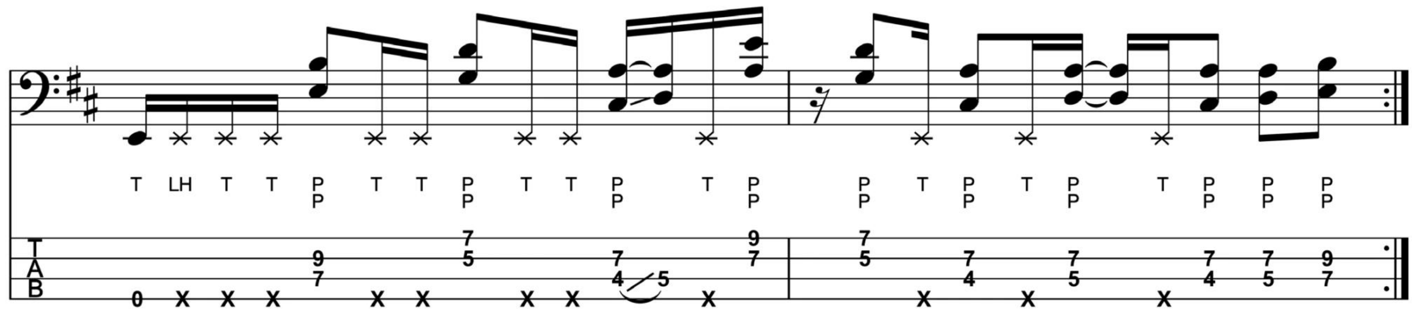


Here's another groove that utilises the funk double stop. Try to let the G on the first beat of the bar (the root note) ring while you play the double stop. This will enhance the chordal effect.

Of course, double stops can be any two notes popped together. The next few exercises make use of some different intervals.

Example 4

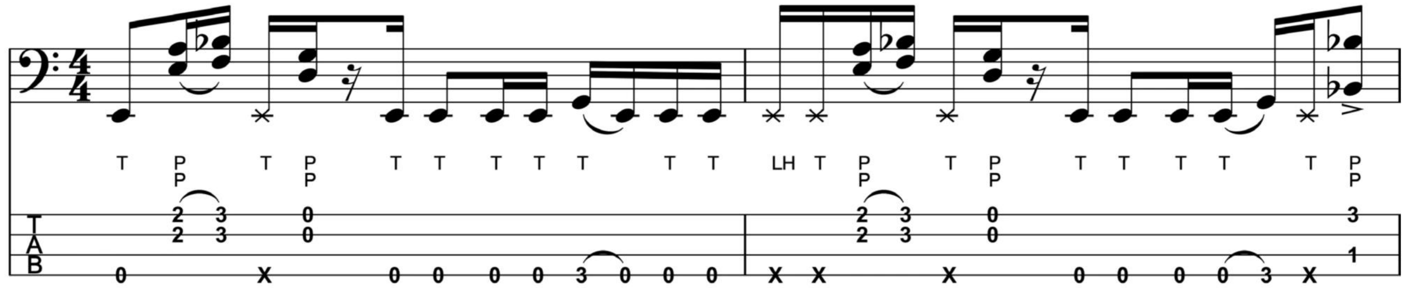


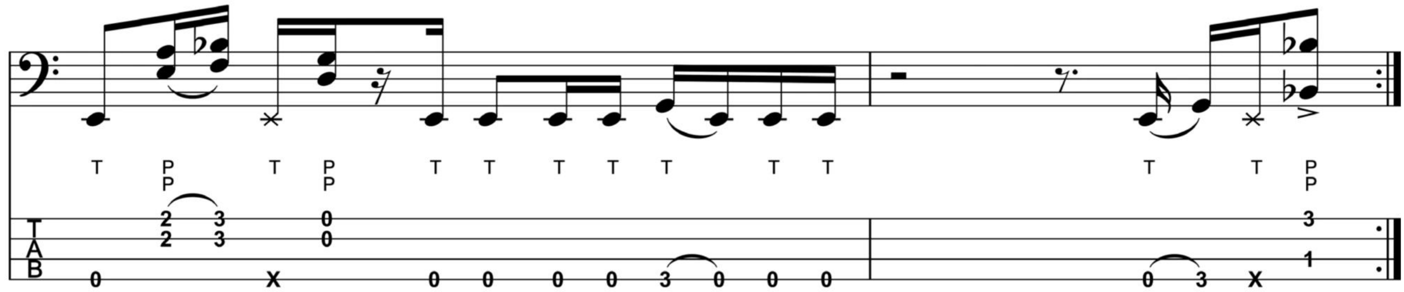


In this exercise, the double stops are fifths. This is another very common use for the double stop. This exercise has a hard rock feel and is very similar to a power chord that a rhythm guitarist might play. For the figure on beat 4 of the first bar, you pop the C♯ and A together and slide the C♯ up into the D while the A continues to ring. This idea recurs throughout the line.

Example 5

♩ = 90

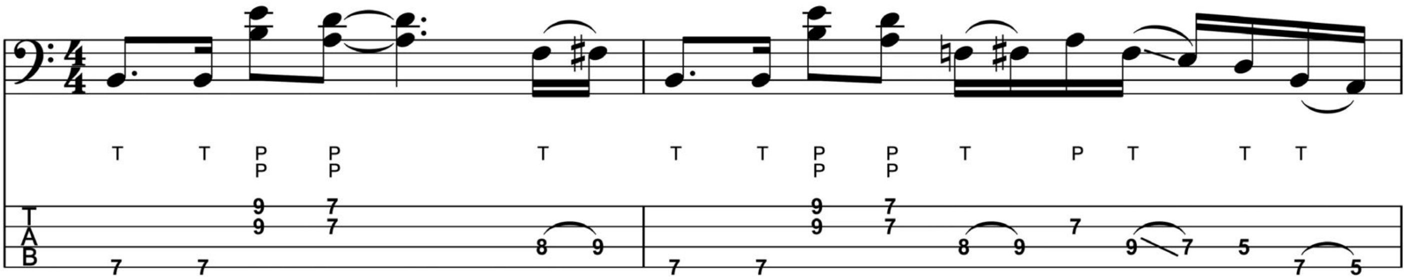


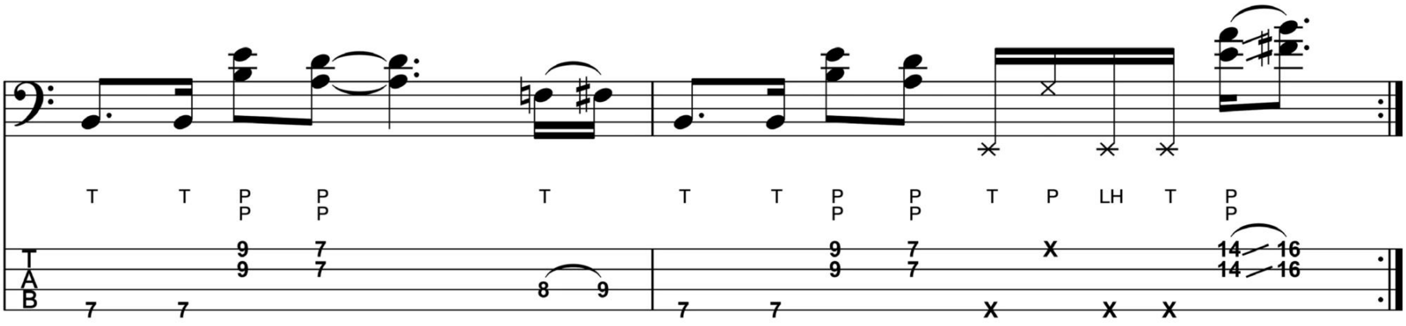


This slow exercise also has a hard rock feel. The first double stop of each bar is played by barring across the D and G-strings with the fourth finger. The second double stop is played by barring with the first finger.

Example 6

♩ = 85

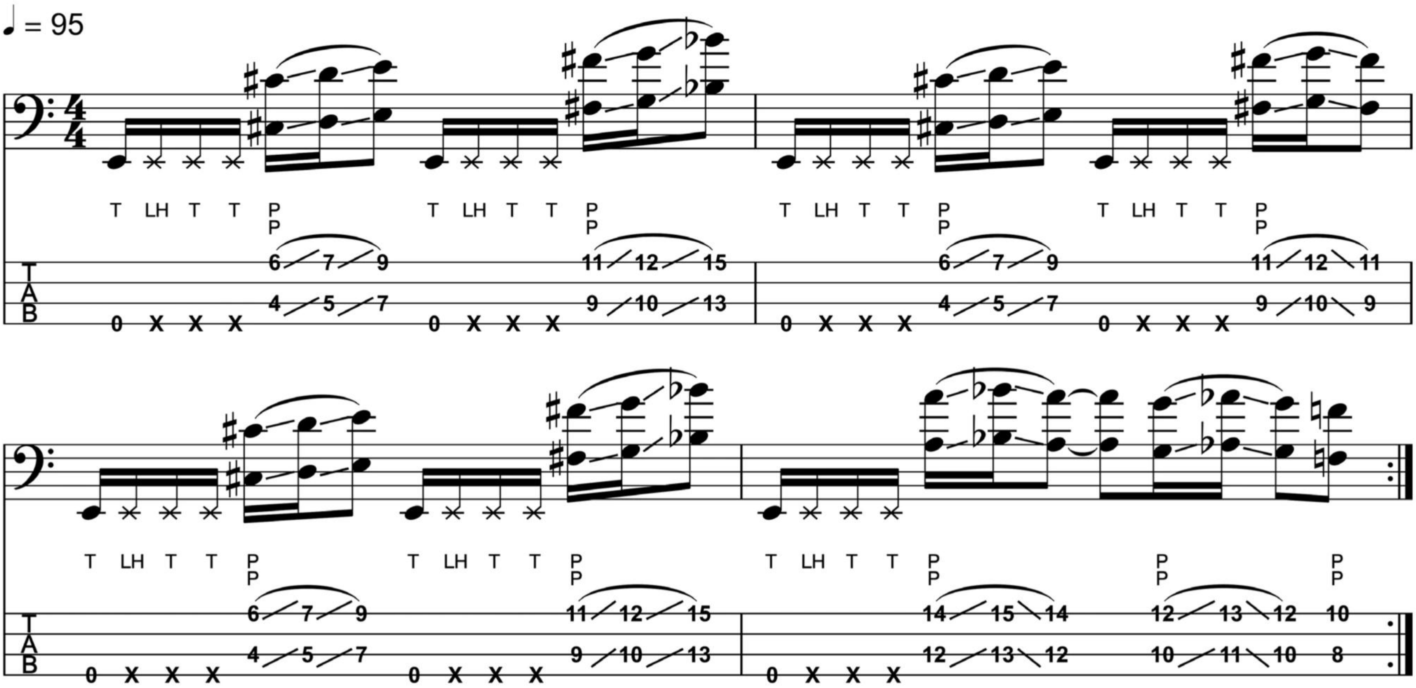




This is another slow rock riff that needs to be played quite aggressively. Most of the double stops here are fourths, but there are a few octaves thrown in as well for good measure.

There may be times when you want to play two notes together that are not on adjacent strings. An example of this would be playing a root note and an octave, or a root note and a seventh. These intervals can be played by popping with the first and third fingers.

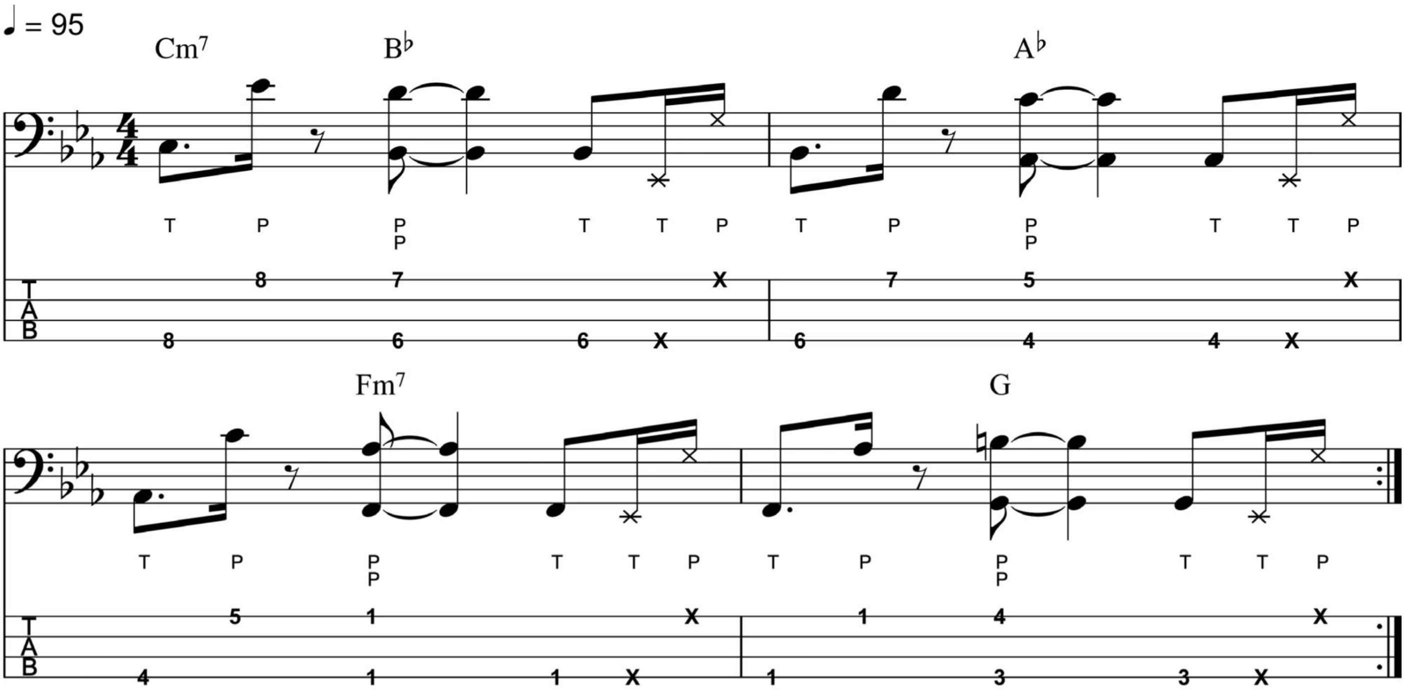
Example 7



In this exercise, the double stops are octaves, which then slide up a further two notes. You only need to pluck the first double stop of each sliding figure, as indicated in the slap guides. Try playing the exercise without the octaves as well – you'll notice that including them thickens up the sound considerably.

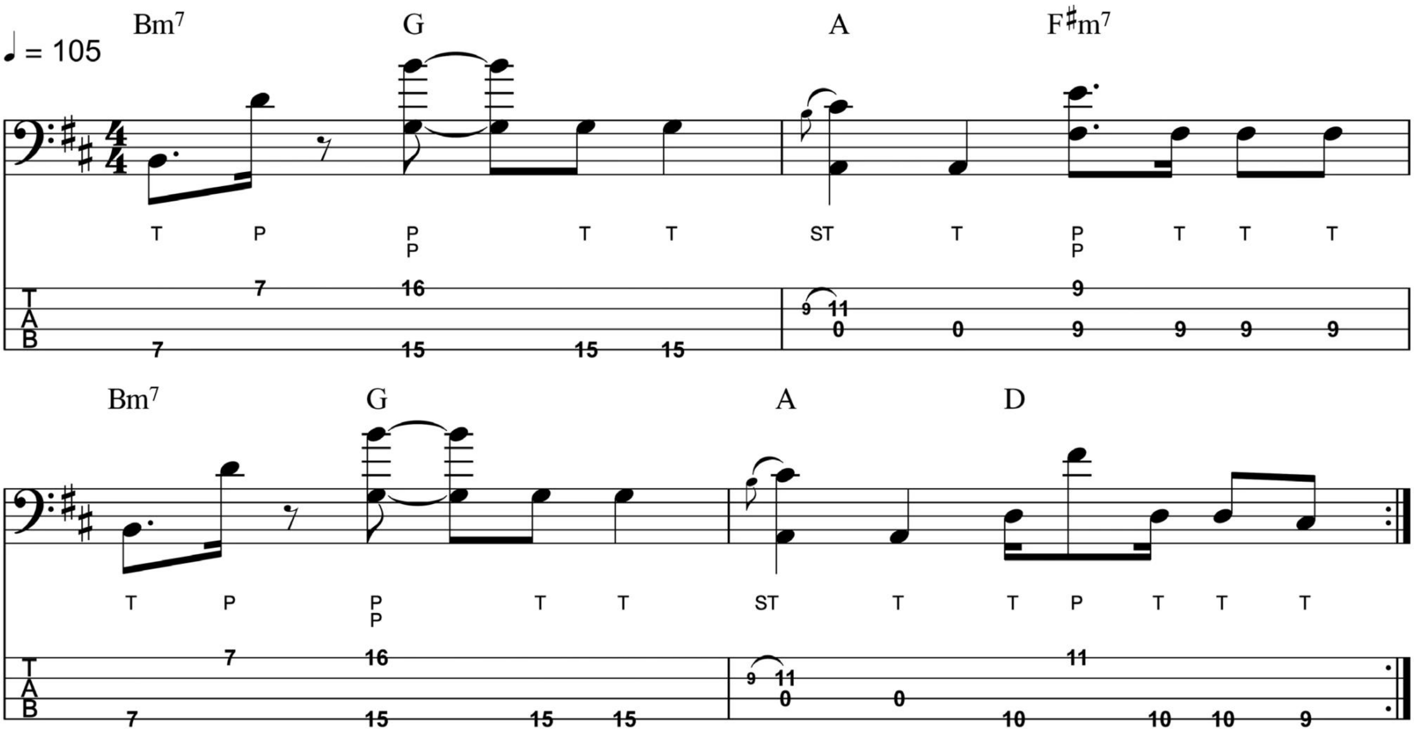
This idea can also be taken a step further to play notes on the E and G-strings together. Because of the distance between the notes, the thumb and first finger are typically used to pluck the strings.

Example 8



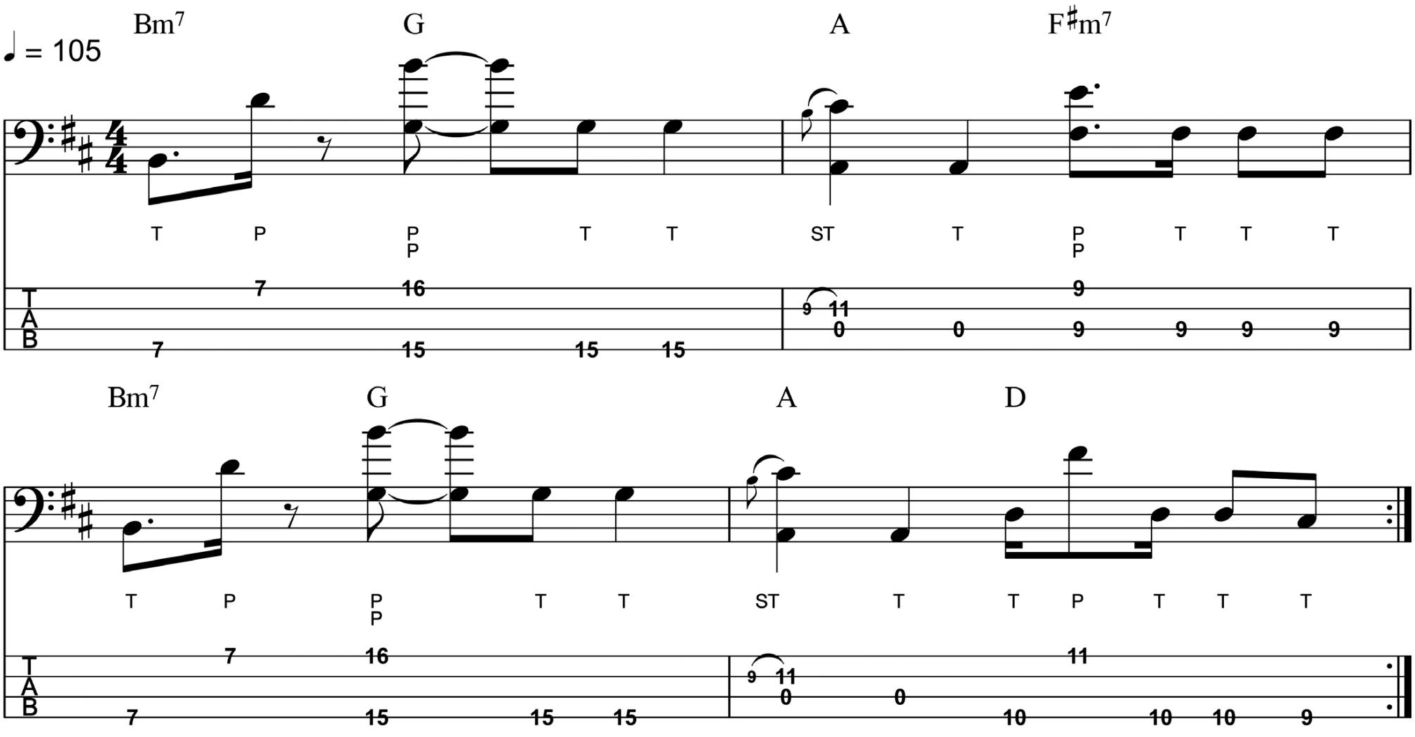
This exercise is a slow, chordal groove. All of the double stops are either major or minor tenths. The ghost notes on the last eighth note of each bar are there for percussive effect.

Example 9



This exercise is a chordal line that uses a lot of tenths. There is also a seventh in the second bar (the F♯ and E). This can either be played with the first and third fingers or with the thumb and first finger.

Example 10



This exercise is a very hyperactive sixteenth-note line that features some tenths in the second and fourth bars. These go by fairly quickly, so be sure to practise this one at a slower tempo to begin with.

In this month's column, we've added an important new element into our slap bass toolkit. Popping two strings together might well be a new concept for many of you, but it's important to get to grips with it as we'll be building on it further next month. Until then…

THE LAST NOTE

The great Dan Veall continues to sign off each issue of this magazine with a subject close to all our hearts — and essential tips about how to do it right. This month: delay pedals

Welcome back! Hello... hello... hello... is there anybody there... there... there..?

VERY GOOD. IT'S DELAY PEDALS THIS MONTH, THEN?

Yes indeed! Stand in a large space and shout 'Echo!' You'll hear a discernible repeat of that sound coming back at you as it rebounds off a distant surface. This is an example of the delay effect. Now, spaces can have lots of surfaces, some near, some far and made of different materials. It follows, then, that lots of reflections of sounds will bounce around a given room. Those scattered multiples of closely-grouped delays make up the sound of reverberation, or 'reverb', which is something else entirely. We're looking at reverb in my next column, but the difference between the two is essentially that delay is a sequence of isolated repeats, whereas reverb is the more general feel and sound of a large space.

Delay pedals come in digital and analogue variants. The D-word makes some people worry that the sounds made this way will be somehow cold or sterile, but have no fear: the modern digital domain enjoys limitless options and creates truly lifelike sound effects. It's also true that the warmer sounds of analogue delay circuits are heard on classic recordings the world over. There is a place for both options: I encourage you to experiment. Check out 'One Of These Days' by Pink Floyd for a classic example of delayed bass.

HOW DO I USE DELAY WITH BASS?

I love to use delays to create ambience, to make a doubling effect as if two basses are playing at once, or to create complex rhythms by layering more than one delay effect in parallel. Delay types include:

Tape Delay or Multi-Tap Early delay effects were created using tape machines with a physical tape running around in a constant loop. The recorded audio would then be 'tapped off' at different positions around the tape, offering up complex and interesting repeats. The medium of tape also meant that the repeats had a pleasing tone. Altering the tape speed at the same time made for its own sonic craziness.

Looping Delay Looping has become a popular artistic choice for bass in recent years. A looper is essentially a single repeat delay effect. Loops can be recorded in layers on top of each other to create complex accompaniments.

Ping-pong A delay that bounces from left to right across the stereo field.

Slapback A short, single-shot delay which – as the name suggests – has the effect of notes slapping back with little feedback.

I'VE GOT A DELAY PEDAL. WHAT THE HELL DO ALL THOSE KNOBS DO?

Most delay pedals will come with at least some of the following features:

Time In terms of the delay effect, this is the time between the first note played and its echo, usually stated in millisecond increments. See also Tap Tempo below.

Beat (type) Aside from selecting the delay in milliseconds, the effect can also be tied to a tempo. Thus, rhythm unit patterns are possible.

Feedback How many times you hear the repeat, or how long the effect tail is.

EQ, HPF, Tone As with many other pedals mentioned in this column, equalisation can range from a very simple filter to control your top end or go as far as managing in which frequencies the delay effect operates.

Tap Tempo The ability to 'tap' a tempo into the pedal so that echoes are in time with an accompaniment.

Mix, Level Use these controls sparingly. Delays are fun, but it will be very easy to swamp your punchy bass sound with too much effect.

Hold Regenerate the delay for as long as the pedal switch is pressed down. This allows you to create choppy, endless rhythms or 'bowed' swells.

DAN'S SETUP

If I have the opportunity to work in stereo, I use a ping-pong delay that bounces in odd times across the stereo field with a wash of reverb to fill in the gaps. Unless you're creating a specific effect, keep delays away from your low end. I use a High Pass Filter for those ambient effects, certainly above 400hz.'

Thanks for reading! Each of my columns will give you some ideas of your own — and remember, there are no rules, so do experiment and let me know how you get on. If you've got a question for me, find me on social media as @DanVeallBassist.

PROMENADE MUSIC

01524 410 202
www.promenademusic.co.uk

4 String Basses

15278 - Bass Collection Jive Bass Black n Blocks
15510 - Bass Collection Rhythm Stick, Sunburst
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag

Cort

16343 - Cort Action 4 PJ Bass, Open Pore Walnut
19278 - Cort Action Junior Bass, Black OPB
19738 - Cort Action Junior Bass, Black OPB, Used
19701 - Cort Action Junior Bass, Walnut OPW
16156 - Cort Action PJ OPB, Open Pore Black
16157 - Cort Action PJ, Open Pore Black Cherry
16323 - Cort Action 4 String Lefty, Black
16769 - Cort B4 FL Plus AS OPN Fretless Bass
16608 - Cort B4 Plus Artisan 4-String Lefthanded
19640 - Cort B4FL MHPZ Fretless Bass
12807 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 4 String Bass
15242 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 5 String Bass
19150 - Danelectro 56 Single Cutaway Bass, Black

Fender

18725 - Fender Am Elite Jazz, Sat Jade Pearl Met
19643 - Fender Am Orig. 70s Jazz, Vintage White
18492 - Fender Am Performer Jazz Bass Penny
17076 - Fender American Pro P Bass, Sunburst
18300 - Fender Classic Series 60s Jazz L, OWhite
16298 - Fender Flea Jazz Bass, Shell Pink, Used
19238 - Fender Flea Active Jazz Bass Silver
8927 - Fender Geddy Lee Jazz Bass in Sunburst
18784 - Fender Ltd Ed Ash Am. Prof. Jazz Bass
19570 - Fender Player Jazz Bass, Sunburst
18095 - Fender Player Jazz Bass, Black
19472 - Fender Player Precision Bass, Sunburst
19503 - Fender Vintera '60s Jazz Bass, Firemist
19316 - Fender Vintera Jazz Bass, Sunburst
18423 - Godin Shifter Classic 4 Vint.Burst HGRN
19600 - Gretsch G2220 Junior Jet Bass, Sunburst
11189 - Hofner HCT Shorty Bass, Black
19420 - Hofner HCT Violin Bass, Sunburst
12188 - Hofner Ignition Violin Bass, Sunburst
17083 - Italia Maranello Bass, Black Sparkle
18208 - Italia Torino Bass, Trans Blue, Used
19216 - Jackson Bass Minion JS1XM, Snow White
19565 - Marco Bass N1 TFL 4-String, Orange, Used
19702 - Markbass MB JP Black Chrome 4 GD PF

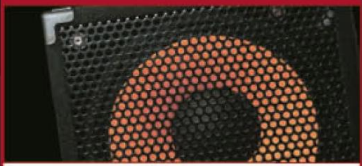
MUSIC MAN

16236 - MusicMan Caprice, Heritage Tobacco Burst
18253 - MusicMan Stingray 4, Blue Pearl, Used
19460 - MusicMan Stingray 4 Bass with 3 EQ Blue
19116 - Musicman Cutlass Bass, Diamond Blue
18114 - NS Design WAV4 Double Bass Trans Black
6919 - Rickenbacker 4003, Mapleglo
18228 - Rickenbacker 4003, Midnight Blue
16421 - Rickenbacker 4003 Bass, Fireglo
7890 - Rickenbacker 4003, Jetglo
18077 - Rickenbacker 4003S Bass Guitar Mapleglo
18083 - Rockbass Streamer LX4 Fretless, Blk Used
19776 - Sandberg California Cherry Sunburst Used
19518 - Schecter Diamond Stiletto Ex. Bass, Used

Squier

18933 - Squier C. Vibe 60s Jazz Bass Fretless
19117 - Squier Classic Vibe 60s Jazz Bass DBlue
19067 - Squier CV 60s P. Bass, Olympic White
19187 - Sterling by MusicMan SubRay4 Vint. Cream
14490 - Vintage LV4 Lefthanded 4 String
14407 - Vintage LVJ74 Lefthanded Bass Guitar, Natural
17084 - Vintage Reissued VJ74 Bass Natural Ash
19680 - Vintage VS4 Reissued Bass, Cherry Red
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
17877 - Yamaha TRBX604FM 4 String, Matte Amber

Bass Cabinets



13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet
15766 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15) Used
16800 - BLUGuitar Nanocab
18851 - Bergantino HDN-112 Bass Cab
18852 - Bergantino HDN-210 Bass Cab
18855 - Bergantino HDN-212 Bass Cab
18853 - Bergantino HDN-410 Bass Cab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13195 - Eden EX210 Bass Cab
16054 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16055 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16041 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohms
16042 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohms
16075 - Eich 115L Bass Cabinet
16052 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16053 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16039 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16040 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16071 - Eich 210M Bass Cabinet
16069 - Eich 212L Bass Cabinet
16070 - Eich 212M Bass Cabinet
16048 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16050 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16068 - Eich 410L Bass Cabinet
16067 - Eich 610L Bass Cabinet
16061 - Eich 612XL Bass Cab
16065 - Eich 810L Bass Cabinet
16321 - Gallien Krueger CX115 Bass Cabinet
16444 - Gallien Krueger CX210 Bass Cab
16320 - Gallien Krueger MB210 Bass Amp Combo

Mark bass

5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
16013 - Markbass 123 Alain Caron Bass Cab
16014 - Markbass CMD Super Combo K1 Alain Caron
17732 - Markbass Marcus Miller Cab 102
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab

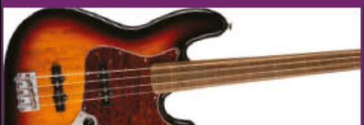
ORANGE

6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
10266 - Orange OBC210 Bass Guitar Speaker Cab
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)
16856 - Trace Elliot 1x10 Elf Cab
19686 - Trace Elliot TE28E 2x8? bass cabinet

Acoustic Basses

19148 - Breedlove Solo Electro Acoustic Bass
10498 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Black
19342 - Ovation B778TX Electro Acoustic Bass
12180 - Protection Racket Ac. Bass Case Dlx
15117 - Takamine GB30CE Electro Acoustic

Fretless Basses



16769 - Cort B4 FL Plus AS OPN Fretless Bass
18083 - Rockbass Streamer LX4 , Blk Used
18933 - Squier C. Vibe 60s Jazz Bass Fretless

Bass Combos

13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)

EDEN

13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16046 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo
19163 - Eich BC112 PRO Bass Combo
16028 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo

Fender

13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
13083 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo

GK GALLIEN-KRUEGER

16765 - Gallien Krueger MB110 Bass Combo
16445 - Gallien Krueger MB112 Bass Combo
16446 - Gallien Krueger MB150S/112 Combo

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin 300W,1x15
5429 - Mark Bass Covers For Mark Bass Amps
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W, 1x12)
19641 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P, Used
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
18371 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD101 Micro60
18372 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 250
18370 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 500
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
16764 - Markbass 102 250 Richard Bona
19729 - Markbass Ninja 102-500 Bass Amp
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

ORANGE

15715 - Orange Crush Bass 100 Bass Amp
15716 - Orange Crush Bass 25 Bass Amp
15714 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Amp
19512 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Used
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

Roland

4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
18035 - Roland Cube CB60XL Bass Amp
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)

Electric & Silent Basses

4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass,Blk
16847 - NS Design NXTA Upright Bass, Active
14014 - Yamaha SLB100 Silent Upright Bass
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Bass Heads

14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
6760 - Ashdown ABM500 EVO III 575W, Used
18848 - Bergantino Bi Amp
18854 - Bergantino Custom Padded Carry Bag
18850 - Bergantino Forte Bass Amplifier
19763 - Bergantino Forté HP Lightweight Bass Amp
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16044 - Eich T1000 Bass Amp
16043 - Eich T300 Bass Amp
16027 - Eich T500 Bass Amp
16026 - Eich T900 Bass Amp

GK GALLIEN-KRUEGER

19468 - GALLIEN KRUEGER LEGACY 500
16318 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Bass Amp Head
16319 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Fusion Bass Amp H
17147 - Gallien Krueger MB800 Bass Head
15588 - Hartke TX600 Bass Amplifier
14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
19081 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head USED
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
19484 - Markbass Evo 1 Bass Amp Head
17254 - Markbass Little Marcus 1000 Bass Amp
17252 - Markbass Little Marcus 250 Bass Amp Head
17009 - Markbass Little Marcus 500 Bass Amp Head
17010 - Markbass Little Marcus 800 Bass Amp Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
19282 - Markbass Little Mark Vintage Bass Amp Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
19674 - Orange Little Bass Thing Bass Amp Head
5351 - Orange Terror Bass 500 TB500
16531 - Trace Elliot Elf 200 Watt Bass Amp Head

5 String Basses

19147 - Cort A5 Plus SCMS Open Pore Natural
14312 - Cort Action V-DLX, Cherry Red Sunburst
13803 - Cort B5 5 String, Tobacco Sunburst, Used
16526 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Black
10213 - Cort GB75WBL 5 String Bass, White Blonde
18731 - Cort GB75JJ 5 String Bass Aqua Blue
16397 - Cort GB75JJ Amber Glossy 5 String Bass
16766 - Ibanez SR30TH5PII Premium, 5-String Bass
18254 - MTD Saratoga Deluxe, 3 Tone Sunburst
19381 - Marleaux MBass 5 String Bass, Burl Top
19727 - Music Man StingRay 5 Special Burnt Apple
14608 - Overwater Progress Deluxe, Pre-Owned
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
19775 - Shine 5 String Bass, Trans Blue, Used

Spector

11196 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Classic Blk Cherry
19735 - Spector Bass Rebop 5DLX Blck Cherry
16329 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Black Cherry Stain
16773 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Trans Black
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
13214 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Black
11195 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5 in Black
16776 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5, Black Cherry
19158 - Sterling by MusicMan SubRay 5 Bass, HBS
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
13193 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Black
16000 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass
17879 - Yamaha TRBX605FM 5 String Dark Red Burst

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THE PLAYERS SPEAK!

BILLY SHEEHAN
MIKI SANTAMARIA
TONY LEVIN

PETER HOOK
GAIL ANN DORSEY
NATHAN EAST

Bass Guitar & bassplayer

PRESENT...

YAMAHA
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LINE 6

A NEW DAWN

THE BASSES, THE AMPS AND THE MODELLING UNIT... ROAD-TESTED

ADVERTORIAL

Ampeg LINE 6 YAMAHA

Billy rocks the crowd at the BB bass launch in Milan, Italy

WELCOME

In 1984, I was looking to replace my old Fender Precision, but the Fender instruments at the time weren't doing well. I'd seen a couple of Yamaha basses in a pro-audio place in Buffalo, New York and I remember being taken aback by how solid they were and that the quality control was flawless. They called me, we had a meeting at the Yamaha factory in Orange County, and they made me the BB3000 Rose Blue bass which was a great instrument. I loved the sound of it – and that led onto the design of my Attitude bass and a great working relationship ever since.

I play production models, because I won't endorse anything that I don't own, play, love or use – so all the features on my Yamaha Attitude, right down to the strings, are all things I personally recommend. These basses are exactly the same as the instruments available in store. When I meet fans with their Attitude basses, I always sight down the neck. I've never seen one with a hump or neck problem – and I must have seen over 200!

I've also used Line 6 products for many years including the G90 wireless unit, which is rock-solid, and the initial POD products. Nowadays, I love the Helix system. I asked Line 6 to model my vintage Pearce preamp and Ashley Audio compressor – and they did it! I'm very lucky to be in a position where I can ask for things of a company of this stature and have them accommodate me, and I'm supremely grateful.

Billy Sheehan
Mr. Big, The Winery Dogs, Sons Of Apollo

A NEW DAWN...

We talk to the movers and shakers at Yamaha about their plans for Ampeg, Line 6 and of course their own bass guitar range

Welcome to our special nine-page salute to three great bass brands, now united in one home! The coming together of Yamaha, Ampeg and Line 6 is a significant event for all of us in bass world, propelling all three brands forward. In an industry that never stands still, serving the needs of bassists with effective, high-quality products is all-important.

"Before the acquisition, there was always enormous respect for the Ampeg brand within Yamaha," says Simon Jones, VP of Marketing at Yamaha Guitar Group. "The brands' histories go back decades and are very good companions for each other, with both committed to delivering exceptional experiences for their customers. Yamaha are renowned for their craftsmanship and quality, and Ampeg for delivering its legendary sound, ubiquitous on major recordings and stages worldwide. Add Line 6's innovation and expertise in the digital domain to the mix – and now we have an almost infinite number of ways for a bassist to create their own unique sounds."

> "THERE WAS ALWAYS ENORMOUS RESPECT FOR THE AMPEG BRAND WITHIN YAMAHA"
> **SIMON JONES**

He adds: "In terms of combined capabilities, we now have craftsmanship, quality, heritage and technology covered, and we aim to leverage them all for the benefit of bass players. We're confident that exciting times are ahead for bassists, as we look to push the boundaries while being mindful of the legacy of each brand."

Talking of legacies, Ampeg has a heritage like few other amps – after all, they were there right at the beginning. "Like so many other classic brands, Ampeg has seen many ups and downs over its 70-year history," explains Adrian Haselhuber, Yamaha Guitar Group's Director of Product Management. "We're extremely excited, and profoundly honoured, that Ampeg has become an important part of the Yamaha family. We intend to build Ampeg products with the same commitment to quality and consistency that Yamaha is known for across the globe. Our Ampeg product team is very focused and passionate about providing bass players with the best products available on the market."

Ampeg amplification is known the world over – you can hear these amps on countless legendary album recordings. Head to Youtube and look at footage of any significant performing band or artist of the last 50 years – and the chances are that you will see, and hear, Ampeg amplification at some point in their history. With the weight of Yamaha now behind it, the Ampeg saga is about to acquire a new chapter.

"Historically, the Ampeg tone required a very specific combination of materials and tube technology to deliver the sound and feel that many bass players have come to love and rely on," adds Haselhuber. "Going forward, we're actively exploring ways to deliver the same kind of experience in a more modern context. We strongly believe that while classics like the B-15 and SVT will remain popular for many years to come, we also have a unique opportunity to refresh and modernise the range of Ampeg products."

So how will Yamaha be managing this iconic name, we ask? "I feel that our job at Ampeg today is to always offer a solution that best fits the situation for every bass player, no matter what the medium, while never losing sight of the 'Ampeg sound'," says Dino Monoxelos, Product Marketing Manager at Ampeg. "There will always be a need or desire for these iconic amplifiers. The SVT/810 is still the most requested

BBP-34

bass rig by production and backline companies. Amplification requirements are changing, though, and bass players are always looking for lighter and more portable solutions for their local gigs."

A quick glance at the artist rosters for the Yamaha, Ampeg and Line 6 brands highlights a diverse cross-section of world-renowned artists, covering a wide scope of musical styles. In all three cases, the relationship between the brand and the artist is all-important, especially in facilitating the musicians' ability to develop their craft.

"The standard and calibre of artist on our roster is extremely important," confirms Matt Ferguson, Director of Artist Relations at Yamaha Guitar Group. "We work with a diverse range of artists in diverse musical genres to help showcase the capabilities of our instruments, from both sonic and technological perspectives. We've recently welcomed long-time Yamaha artist Peter Hook to the Ampeg family, for example, but it's entirely up to the artist whether the two streams, Yamaha and Ampeg, cross over."

On this note, the unification of Ampeg and Line 6 under one umbrella means that any working bassist can make use of the sonic benefits offered by the legendary Ampeg tone in a standard amplification format, or in a more transport-friendly option, courtesy of the Helix system. Either way, bassists are offered the best of both worlds, explains Haselhuber.

"One of the most beautiful features of Helix is that it's so easy to integrate into just about any existing setup," he tells us. "A combination of Helix or HX Stomp and a full SVT stack yields beautiful tones and many creative possibilities. As Helix contains digital reproductions of popular Ampeg amplifiers, you can also use it without an amp on-stage and plug straight into the PA. The possibilities are nearly endless. We're already seeing a trend toward smaller and lighter products, which is likely to continue. Sound quality has improved through digital technology – and we believe that more and more customers will prefer the economy and convenience of digital amp solutions." Bassists with suffering backs will definitely see his point!

With all three brands poised to serve the musical community over the next decade and beyond, it comes as no surprise to learn that technology is again being embraced to create even better instruments and equipment to enhance the music production and performing aspects for the musician of today – and tomorrow. Dave Miner, Yamaha Product Marketing Manager, speculates on how the categories could evolve... "The recent restrictions on rosewood will be a catalyst for a lot of work with alternate materials, with an eye towards sustainability and minimising environmental impact. Meanwhile, the increased availability of 3D printing will represent an accessible option for players to customise their equipment in a highly-personalised fashion."

He continues: "The trend towards increased connectivity suggests some interesting possibilities for what information can be sent into and out of any piece of equipment, opening up entirely new creative possibilities for players. We've seen modelling technology mature in the past 10 years, to the point where it's now a credible first-choice solution for live and studio work. We could see new virtual amp or effect designs, which have never existed physically, become as iconic and essential as a classic tube amp or boutique stomp."

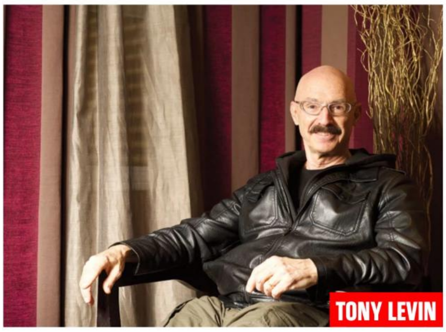
You read it here first. The future's bright for these brands – but don't take our word for it. Let's hear what some of the world's greatest bassists have to say...

NATHAN EAST

MIKI SANTAMARIA

RICHARD JONES

STANLEY CLARKE


TONY LEVIN

THE PLAYERS SPEAK!

Yamaha, Ampeg and Line 6-endorsing bass players from around the world raise a glass to their chosen technologies

GAIL ANN DORSEY

DAVID BOWIE, LENNY KRAVITZ, TEARS FOR FEARS

Gail Ann came to prominence with David Bowie in 1994 – but her earliest interaction with Ampeg came much earlier in her musical journey, she tells us. "I like Ampeg for the same reason that I chose Music Man Stingray basses. As a kid, watching all the bands on TV, Ampeg was there – you saw it, it was a visual thing, and Ampeg was always the amp that looked coolest to me. That's the amp I play now, the SVT-VR. When I first started doing sessions, someone would always roll out a B-15 Fliptop, because every studio in the world had one. I've played through a lot of different amps – but you plug into an Ampeg and there's no argument."

No matter whether she's recording at home in New York, in Europe or traversing global stages with Lenny Kravitz, Gail Ann relies on Ampeg for her sound and tone. "I always like to have an amp along for a recording, either a B-15 or an SVT-VR and an 8x10. I also have the Rocket Bass B100R combo which is solid-state – and I've just been sent the Scrambler DI box too."

In tandem with Stingray basses, Ampeg provides the tone she needs. "It gives them more colour and reins in a lot of the brightness – which is a good combination because I don't like 'bright' bass," she laughs. "Ampeg amps, whether they're solid-state models or valve models, just 'create' more than any other amp I've tried. I'm very happy to be part of the Ampeg family."

MIKI SANTAMARIA

YOUTUBER

Yamaha have always been quick to spot talented young musicians – so it came as no surprise when they approached internet sensation Miki Santamaria in 2013, after his Extreme Slap Bass Solo video created a buzz.

"Yamaha Spain contacted me and asked if I would be interested in collaborating with them and perform at various international events," he tells us. "I was eager to explore the possibilities, and I now have many Yamaha instruments including two BB734s, a Nathan East BBNE2, a BB735 and my new BB custom model. I often request Ampeg equipment when performing – and now that I'm an Ampeg endorsee, I'm looking forward to incorporating their amplification into my setup."

Miki is a busy working musician and needs an instrument to be playable straight out of the box. "I think the great thing about Yamaha instruments is the quality and consistency of the cheaper ranges. They are super-affordable, but fantastic for the price. I demonstrate all of the ranges and I can play happily with any of them."

You can check out Miki's bass playing at his Youtube channel, where your mind will no doubt be blown by the economy and groove of his approach to the coolest instrument of the lot. A master of a whole range of techniques, he's a great example of the prodigious talent of today's new wave of bass players.

RICHARD JONES

STEREOPHONICS

Welsh rockers Stereophonics stage a blitzkrieg of a live show – so bass-man Richard Jones needs equipment that can stand up to the rigours of touring. "I'm currently utilising a Line 6 Helix rack system on-stage, along with two BBP34 basses and a BBP35," he explains. "I've played many basses over the years, but what sets these apart is their playability. The neck is so comfortable, while the body shape is ergonomic and the tone and output from the pickups rivals any active pickups."

He adds: "You have to be comfortable with an instrument that you will be playing for hours a day, week after week, month after month. You need to have a connection with an instrument you intend to use, and I think you can feel that straight away with a good bass."

> "THE HELIX IS THE PERFECT TOOL TO REPLICATE SOUNDS"
> **RICHARD JONES**

Jones's BBP34 has already been put to good use on the band's album, *Kind*. "You can hear this bass stand out on 'Burst This Town' and 'I Just Wanted The Goods'. Although I'm new to the Yamaha family, I've been using Line 6 for around 15 years in a live capacity. I wanted to upgrade from the Bass POD XT and over the course of a few months of rehearsal, I transitioned to the Helix rack. It's the perfect tool to replicate a considerable amount of sounds. I find the Helix quite inspiring!"

STANLEY CLARKE

SOLO ARTIST, RETURN TO FOREVER, SOUNDTRACK COMPOSER

Stanley Clarke is a bass pioneer and a bona fide legend of the instrument – and a constant throughout his career has been his use of Ampeg amplification. "We go way back!" he says. "I was using Ampeg equipment back in the late Sixties – and the first thing I used was a B-12 with an acoustic bass. In the Seventies, I got a B-15: the reason I used those amps was because they react more 'realistically'."

He adds: "I'm an upright bass player, and there's an acoustic delay because of the nature of the instruments, so when I use Ampeg, I still get that acoustic feeling, whether I'm playing acoustic or not. It's a warmer amplifier with a warmer response. I'm currently using two rigs, one for each pickup on my Alembics so that I can run them in stereo, consisting of an SVT-4PRO amplifier into PN-410HLF and PN115HLF cabinets. For the acoustic bass, I use the biggest combo – and between it all, the sound is great."

Stanley certainly knows what he's looking for when it comes to bass tones – so how does his Ampeg backline help to sculpt his sound? "The Ampeg has a natural compression to it, which is just the nature of the cabinets and the valves," he explains, "so it pulls in the harshness of the Alembics and warms them up a little bit. The reason I loved to play Alembics was because I could get a lot of different sounds out of them – but I didn't particularly want all those highs. I use Ampeg to tame all that stuff. They work very well for me."

TONY LEVIN

PETER GABRIEL, KING CRIMSON, JOHN LENNON, STICK MEN

Tony Levin is a well-known musical chameleon – and he creates his musical landscapes with Ampeg amplification. "The Ampeg Portaflex and the SVT have been the gold standard for amped bass sound in studios and in heavy rock music for as long as I've been playing bass," the great man tells us. "I first used Ampeg when I made the move from classical bass over to electric bass. I bought an Ampeg Baby Blue in 1966 and the glorious Fliptop Portaflex."

He continues: "When I moved to New York, I found that 1x15 amp in every studio. Back then, there was a 'bass amp club' where you paid dues to have the use of those amps. I don't feel guilty about it, but I used the amps and never joined the club! I eventually approached Ampeg when I was doing tours with Peter Gabriel and King Crimson and requiring amps in different territories. The company was very nice to me from the start."

A bassist for all seasons, Tony utilises a host of Ampeg amplification. "In my home studio, I've got the SVT2 Pro setup with a 4x10 cab. I was just out on tour with the Levin Brothers – and for electric upright, I like the BA210 combo. Sometimes with that band, and with Stick Men, I'll use my PB212-H cab with the Portaflex 800. With Peter Gabriel, it's a good old SVT with an 8x10 cab – thank goodness for crew!"

NATHAN EAST

ERIC CLAPTON, PHIL COLLINS, TOTO, FOURPLAY, MICHAEL JACKSON

Few bassists have appeared on as many recordings as Nathan East, who celebrates his 40th year with Yamaha this year. It was a natural choice, he says. "The fact that it's been 40 years and I haven't used anything else is incredible to me!" he smiles. "In 1980, I went over to A&M Records and Abraham Laboriel was playing a BB1000. He let me play it, and the way it blended with the track and the way it recorded was just amazing. On my first trip to Japan, with Lee Ritenour, I was presented with a wine-coloured BB1000. I played it at the gig. That was my very first Yamaha – and that's how we got the party started.

"Before that, I was using my Alembic and some Fenders. But what Yamaha basses allow me to do is stamp my character on the music I play, and for me to be 'invisible'. They let me fit into lots of different styles of music. I get to be the one that determines the timbre and the colour of the sound."

The relationship Nathan has with Yamaha is very much a two-way street, he says. "There's an ethos about the company when it comes to supporting its artists. No matter where I am in the world, I know I have their support – and if I need anything, I just need to contact them and it will be there. I don't choose equipment for any other reason than the standard I want to create for myself."

> "THE FACT THAT IT'S BEEN 40 YEARS AND I HAVEN'T USED ANYTHING ELSE IS INCREDIBLE TO ME!"
> **NATHAN EAST**

YAMAHA BB BASS RANGE

We road-test four mighty BBs... But which one comes out on top?

In 2017, Yamaha's BB range of basses was relaunched to much fanfare, with good reason – the BB design is a veritable classic. Bassists the world over have found their musical character using a BB bass. The sturdy, highly playable design, reinforced with sumptuous bass tones, is instantly recognisable – so how do four models from across the range compare?

Build Quality

If there's one feature that is widely recognised in all Yamaha basses, it's their sturdy build quality and consistency of design and tone. All four BB basses that we tested feature the curvaceous body shape, the familiar headstock profile, classic finish options and single-coil plus split-coil pickup setup. Contouring for player comfort is consistent at front and back, while the deep lower cutaway offers unhindered access to the upper frets of the richly coloured, 21-fret rosewood fingerboard.

Familiar body and neck timbers – maple, mahogany, alder and rosewood – have been used across all four models. The highly affordable BB234, at the lower end of the range, naturally features fewer design features such as the multi-laminate body and neck construction. The neck-to-body joint is sturdy across all four models while all, aside from the BB234, utilise the six-bolt Miter Neck Joint system for improved sustain and resonance between the neck and body.

All four necks feature a shallow D-shaped profile, which benefits the player in providing a sleek and player-friendly experience across the whole neck. With 19mm string spacing and 40mm nut widths, the BB models are highly playable, with comfort a paramount consideration. The hardware is solidly attached and operates smoothly, while the volume, balance, tone and EQ controls are effective across the whole turn – a definite plus from the player's perspective.

Sounds And Playability

Before plugging in, it was evident that all four basses possess the signature BB tone – a piano-like sound with impressive definition, solid in the bottom end, with strong mid-range performance and a clear, ringing top end. Once plugged in, the differences between each model become a little clearer.

The BB234 is a strong performer despite its budget-friendly pricetag, and its tonal performance is suitably vigorous for a bass at this price. Certain aspects of the timber finish are limited for cost reasons, but it's a fine playing instrument nonetheless. While the BB434M is clearly a higher-grade instrument, resplendent in its Tobacco Burst finish with pronounced tones to match, the satin neck finish gives the player an organic feel which will suit many bassists.

RRP
Yamaha BB234 **£403**
Yamaha BB434M **£685**
Yamaha BB734A **£986**
Yamaha BBP34 **£1903**

The level of finishing given to the Matte Translucent Black BB734A looks and feels worthy of an instrument costing twice as much. Its custom-tuned active circuit is paired well with YGD split and single-coil pickups to project added dynamics, and the added flexibility makes this an ideal choice of instrument, no matter what your preferred musical style may be.

The BBP34 is hand-crafted in Japan and even straight from its case, the comparison with the other models is marked. It's easy to see where the extra outlay is going in terms of finish, feel, playability and tonal response. The whole instrument resonates clearly, with a strong sustain: just holding the bass confirms that it's a tone monster, no doubt benefiting from undergoing Yamaha's Initial Response Acceleration process. Despite being passive, its tonal character is tightly focused – and soloing each pickup highlights what a strong all-round performer this bass is. At this price, the BBP34 is up against considerable competition, but it is certainly worthy of consideration if you're looking for a passive bass that packs a punch.

Conclusions

All four basses offer something a little different, despite being of a similar format, and the improvements as you move through the range are apparent. All four instruments sit very well in the price band which they occupy, and their shared characteristics work in their favour. Value for money is backed up by a classic design that will address the needs of many bassists. These are versatile and reliable instruments, with tones that are flexible enough to work in any musical context. Impressive!

AMPEG
PF AND SVT RANGE

We road-test the big boxes

RRP
Ampeg PF-500, **£559**
Ampeg PF-210HE, **£559**
Ampeg PF-50T, **£1175**
Ampeg SVT-610HLF, **£1454**
Ampeg SVT-VR, **£2910**

AMPEG SVT-610HLF

Simply mentioning the name Ampeg conjures up images and memories of shows and recordings gone by, as well as classic bass performances. These amplifiers and cabinets have a reputation to uphold – and the modern iterations of these products continue to represent the best the brand has to offer.

Matching the PF-500 amp, which delivers 500 watts at 4 ohms, with the PF-210HE cabinet is a highly effective pairing – and what's more, it's easily transportable, whether you're playing at home, at a rehearsal studio or on a gig. Featuring a MOSFET preamp and Class D power stage, and weighing in at 5 kilos (amp) and 21.6 kilos (cabinet), this combination offers a flexible solution for the working and non-working bassist. The adjustable midrange offers the player extensive tone shaping, while the tweeter control on the back of the cabinet provides additional clarity for percussive playing styles. With an array of input and output connections including headphone output and audio input sockets, this is also an ideal pairing for home practice.

Connecting the PF-50T – rated at 50 watts at 4 or 8 ohms – to this cabinet offers a marked change in tonality, replicating the vintage tones for which the Portaflex is historically known. If you want to recreate the classic Motown bass tones of the late, great James Jamerson, the 2x10 cabinet performs admirably. Switch the tweeter off for maximum warmth! Not only does the bass response send a shiver down your spine, you can also feel the rich colouring which the all-tube architecture delivers. If you require a little extra tonal sparkle alongside the vintage warmth, the ever-flexible mid-section, treble and tweeter controls add enough definition and detailed response to cut through a band mix.

The SVT-VR amplifier, which supplies 300 watts at 2 or 4 ohms, is a world-renowned classic – and matched with the SVT-610HLF cabinet, is capable of shifting serious amounts of air, such is its reputation. Whether you play passive or active instruments, this pairing offer warmth and punch, with well-rounded sonic detail. With a frequency response from 42Hz to 18kHz and an additional horn, the sonic performance of this cabinet is a real joy, as every note responds and blooms. Rock players will enjoy the grit and harmonically rich tonal performance on offer, while soul, funk and reggae players will bask in the warm, bass-driven overtones that project every line. If you're looking for that Ampeg tone, these amplifiers and cabinets should be your only port of call.

AMPEG PF-50T

AMPEG PF-210HE

AMPEG SVT-VR

AMPEG PF-500

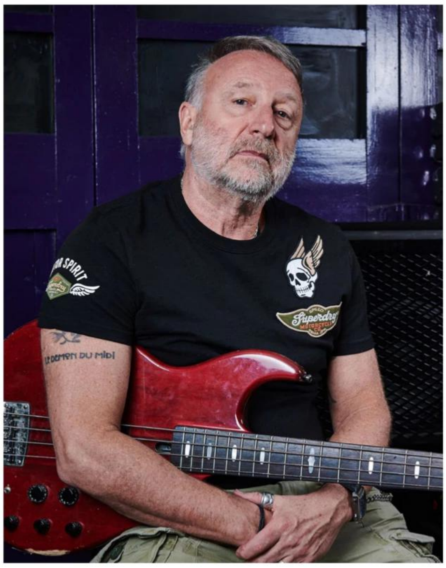
RRP
Line 6 Helix HX Stomp, **£695**

LINE 6
HELIX HX STOMP RANGE

We 'stomp' on the suitably-named Line 6 Helix HX. Stand well clear!

The HX Stomp is a modelling and FX unit of serious power despite its small size. Its dimensions make it ideal as a replacement for your pedalboard, and potentially your amplification as well, if you work on clean stages without backline or monitoring. A quick look at the manual and tuition video confirms that this unit is a feature-laden, compact and immensely flexible 'hub' that can be incorporated into your setup, and requirements, in any way you so wish.

The unit's construction is excellent, as it's sturdily built in a black sparkle metal chassis with robust controls and fittings. With an array of in/out/mono/stereo connections and a pair of MIDI sockets along with a USB connection, it boasts all the flexibility you could possibly need. The control panel is clean, and operating the unit becomes intuitive after following the supplied tutorials, and the effects library and amp/cabinet modelling is top-notch – as you would expect from Line 6. For those looking for a great FX board or as a replacement for their amplification and FX system, it won't leave you wanting.



Text: Mike Brooks
Images: Future Studio and Yamaha Guitar Group

For further information on Yamaha, Ampeg and Line 6, visit:

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ASK THE MASTER

The great Peter Hook answers your questions on Yamaha, Ampeg and Line 6

For anyone familiar with Peter Hook and his incendiary bass-lines, it comes as no surprise that he has relied on Yamaha basses and Ampeg amplification for much of his career. Hooky, now touring with the acclaimed Peter Hook & The Light, has focused on delivering classic Joy Division and New Order albums to his fans in recent years, so he needs an arsenal of tried-and-trusted bass gear. Let's see what he has to say!

What made you choose Yamaha and Ampeg, Peter?
I've used Yamaha basses for every recording session in my career, especially my BB1200s. My raison d'être was always to hit the thing as hard as I could – so I never needed a compressor. What's one of those? Ha ha! I've never had to worry about the bottom two strings. I've never held back in my life! It's always been about pushing everything to the top and making it go 'woomph'. There's no subtlety in it, and that Yamaha just delivered that attack that I was looking for and needed. Add Ampeg amplification and it's a relationship made in heaven. I've always been a massive Ampeg fan. You always know you're going to be okay with Ampeg – and sometimes, you're going to be totally fantastic! Ampeg has always been perfect for me. They've been so reliable and sound-wise, they've sounded like beasts... With the band running for cover!

> "IT'S ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT PUSHING EVERYTHING TO THE TOP AND MAKING IT GO 'WOOMPH'"
> **PETER HOOK**

What is it about the BB bass range that works for you?
For me, my original BB1200S bass is absolutely perfect and works with me, instead of working against me. My career has been a constant fight with instruments – an absolute nightmare! – but my original BB1200S is perfection. Literally every recording that I've played a four-string bass guitar on has been on a BB1200S, every single one. I've tried many, many other basses but I've never found one that gives me the balance, feel and sound of this one. Because of the through-neck, I've never had any construction problems. They're as tough as old boots. My original 1200S looks like it's been spiked by a steamroller! It took me a long time to find another one that was exactly the same, because I could do everything with it. It's priceless – which is why I don't use it for live shows in case it gets irreparably damaged or stolen. They'll be burying me with mine.

You're now endorsed by all three brands. How did that come about?
That's right – I became a Yamaha and Line 6 endorsee in the past year and now I'm endorsed by Ampeg as well. It makes me wonder what I was doing for the other 43 years of my career! I have the accolade that Line 6 wanted to use my Yamaha bass tone to create a sound profile for the bass version of the Variax. Half of me thought 'Well, it's a great honour' – and the other half thought it would be like the Native Americans' belief that when you take their picture, you steal their soul. But I'm a great fan – I've got a Helix here, ready to go!

Finally, tell us about your new Yamaha custom BB.
After much design talk, my new custom model is hitting the spot. Additional screws at the neck-joint have achieved the rigidity and solidity that I was looking for, and they've improved the bass response – if that were even possible – and it's fantastic. It's as close to a BB1200S that Yamaha will ever get to, which makes it an absolutely unique bass guitar. I cannot deny that the guy who designed the original BB1200S basically owns the bass sound on the original New Order recordings. It's always been a pleasure to deal with Yamaha – and now that all three brands come under one umbrella, I couldn't have planned it better if I'd tried. It's like a dream come true for me!

9020
9000